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Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

VOLUME XIV

EDITION DEFINITIVE

OF WHICH THERE ARE PRINTED ON IMPERIAL JAPAN
PAPER ONE THOUSAND COPIES

No. 333

The Human Comedy

SCENES OF PRIVATE LIFE

VOLUME III

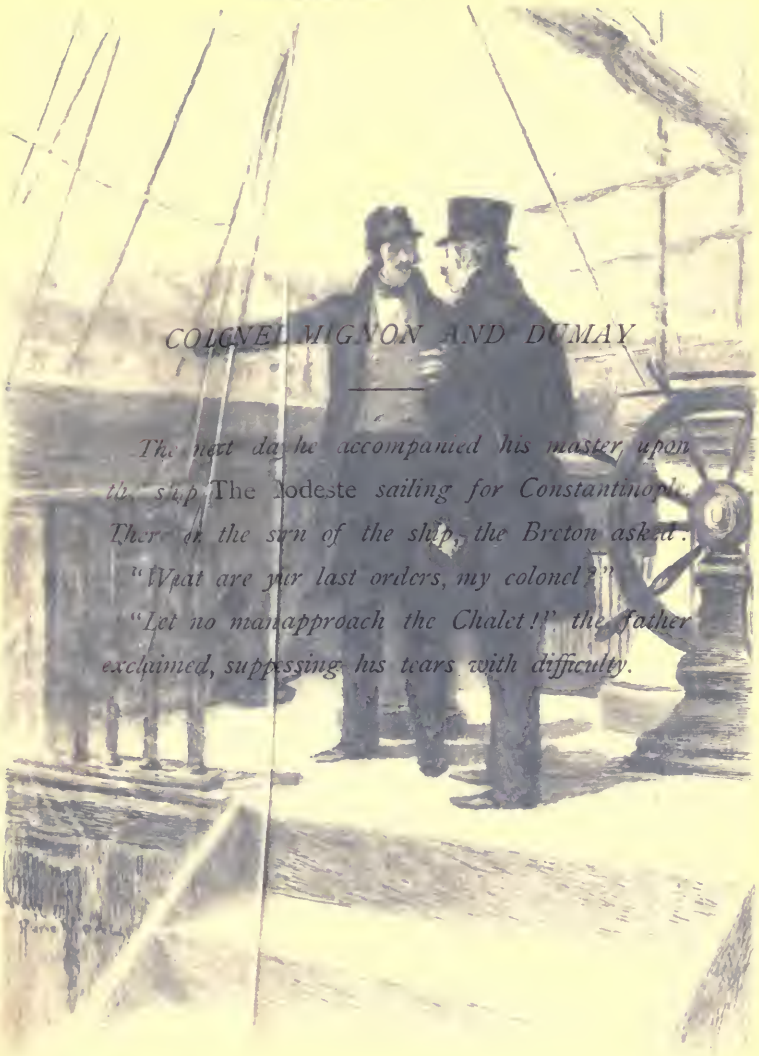
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COLONEL MEGVOY AND DUMAY

The next day he accomplished his mastery upon the ship The Iodeste sailing for Constantinople. There on the very of the ship, the Breton asked: "What are your last orders, my colonel?"

"Let no man approach the Cimbri!" the Father exclaimed, suppressing his tears with difficulty.



COLONEL MIGNON AND DUMAY

The next day he accompanied his master upon the ship The Rodeste *sailing for Constantinople. There at the sun of the ship, the Breton asked:*

"What are your last orders, my colonel?"

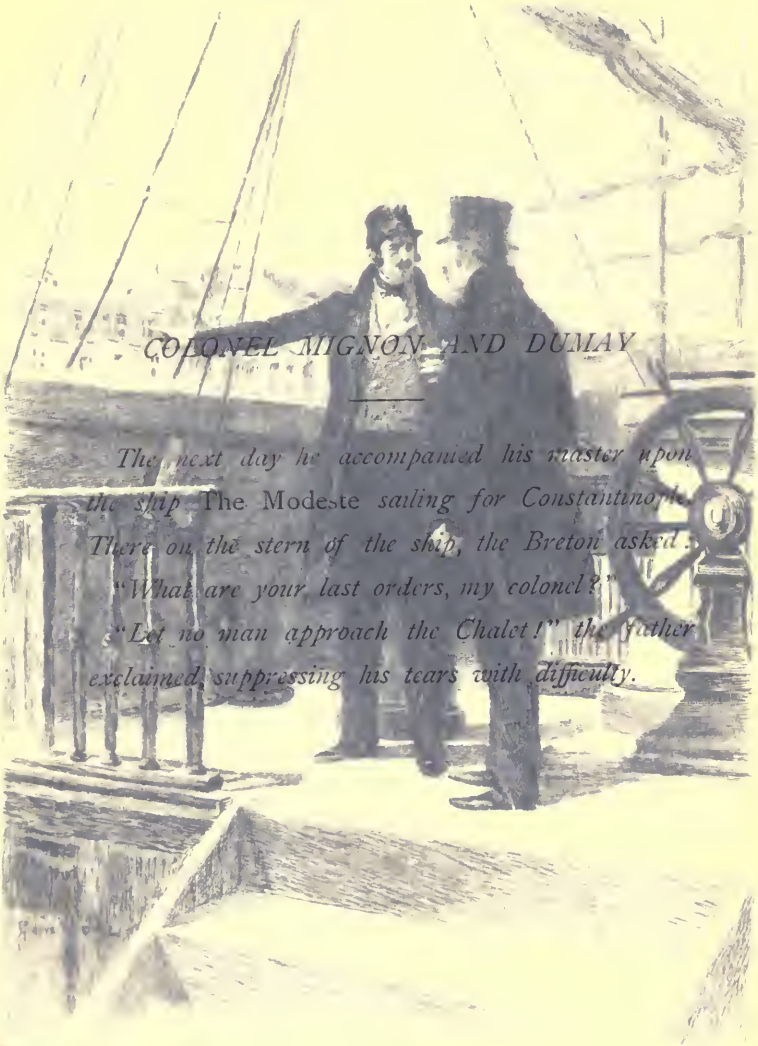
"Let no man approach the Chalet!" the father exclaimed, suppressing his tears with difficulty.

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Honoré de Balzac *NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME COMPLETELY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH*

MODESTE MIGNON BY GERTRUDE CHRISTIAN FOSDICK



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The next day he accompanied his master upon the ship The Modeste *sailing for Constantinople. There on the stern of the ship, the Breton asked:*

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MODESTE MIGNON

BY GERTRUDE CHRISTIAN FOSDICK

WITH EIGHT ETCHINGS BY EUGÈNE DECISY, AFTER PAINTINGS BY PIERRE VIDAL

IN ONE VOLUME

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MODESTE MIGNON

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TO A POLISH LADY

Daughter of an enslaved land, an angel through love, through fancy a demon, in faith a child, old through experience, in brain a man, in heart a woman, through hope a giant, a mother through suffering and a poet through thy dreams:—to thee, who art still Beauty itself, belongs this work, in which thy love, thy fancy, thy faith, thy experience, thy grief, thy hope and thy dreams are as the warp which carries a woof less brilliant than the poetry locked in thy soul; whose expression animating thy face, is for those who love thee, what the symbols of a lost language are for scholars.

DE BALZAC.

MODESTE MIGNON

*

About the beginning of the month of October, 1829, Monsieur Simon-Babylas Latournelle, a notary, went up from Havre to Ingouville arm in arm with his son, and accompanied by his wife, near whom walked, like a page, the head clerk of the office, a little hunchback named Jean Butscha. When these four persons—two of whom made this journey every evening—arrived at the bend of the road which turns back upon itself like those which the Italians call *corniches,* the notary, from the height of a terrace, looked about him behind and before, to make sure that no one could hear him and then, as an extra precaution, lowered his voice.

"Exupère," he said to his son, "try to execute the little manœuvre which I am about to entrust to you, with intelligence; and without trying to understand it; but if you divine it, I command you to throw it into that Styx, which every notary and every man destined for the law, ought to have within himself for the secrets of others. After having presented your respectful homage to Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, to Monsieur and Madame Dumay and to Monsieur Gobenheim, if he is at the Chalet; when

silence is re-established, Monsieur Dumay will take you into a corner and you can look attentively at Mademoiselle Modeste—I will allow you that—all the time that he is speaking to you. My worthy friend will ask you to go out and take a walk, and come back in about an hour, about nine o'clock, with an excited air; and trying to imitate the breathing of a man who has been running, say then, in his ear very low, but nevertheless so that Mademoiselle Modeste can hear you: 'The young man is here.'"

Exupère was going the next day to Paris to begin his studies. This near departure had decided Latournelle to propose his son to his friend Dumay as an accomplice in the important conspiracy which this order was to reveal.

"Is Mademoiselle Modeste, then, suspected of having an intrigue?" Butscha timidly asked his patron.

"Nonsense, Butscha!" replied Madame Latournelle, again taking her husband's arm.

Madame Latournelle, the daughter of the recorder of an inferior court for civil causes, considered herself sufficiently authorized by her birth to call herself the issue of a parliamentary family. This pretension already indicates why this woman, a little too red-faced for refinement, tries to affect the majesty of the tribunal whose decrees are scribbled by her father. She takes snuff, holds herself as stiff as a ramrod, poses as a woman of importance, and resembles a mummy which has been, for the

moment, galvanized into life. She tries to give her sharp voice an aristocratic tone; but she scarcely succeeds in covering up the faults of her education. Her social utility seems indisputable when one observes her bonnets, covered with flowers, the masses of frizzled hair on her temples and the dresses that she chooses. Where would the merchants place these productions if there were no Madame Latournelles? All the absurdities of this worthy woman, essentially charitable and pious as she was, would have perhaps passed unperceived, if Nature, which sometimes amuses itself in producing these droll creatures, had not given her the height of a drum-major to make the inventions of this provincial spirit more conspicuous. She had never been out of Havre, she believed in the infallibility of Havre. She bought everything there, and she had her dresses made there; she called herself a woman to her finger-ends; she venerated her father and adored her husband. The little Latournelle had the courage to wed this girl, already arrived at the anti-matrimonial age of thirty-three, and had even had a son. As he could have obtained in many other ways the sixty thousand francs dot given by the recorder, people attributed his uncommon intrepidity to a desire to escape the invasion of the Minotaur, against whom his personal qualifications would have been an insufficient guarantee, had he been guilty of the imprudence of bringing home a young and pretty wife. The notary had, however, recognized the good qualities of Mademoiselle Agnès—thus she was

called—and realized that a woman's beauty soon passes and vanishes in the eyes of her husband. As to the insignificant youth, on whom the recorder bestowed his own Norman name in baptism, Madame Latournelle is still so surprised at becoming a mother at thirty-five years and seven months that she would still provide him, were it necessary, with her breast and her milk—a hyperbole which will give an idea of her motherly devotion.

"How beautiful my son is!"—she said quite naturally, showing him to her little friend Modeste, when her handsome Exupère walked before them when going to mass.

"He resembles you," replied Modeste Mignon, just as she might have said, "what wretched weather!"

The silhouette of this person, as an accessory, seemed necessary in saying that Madame Latournelle had for three years chaperoned the young girl for whom the notary and his friend Dumay were to arrange one of those snares called *mouse-traps* in the *Physiologie du Mariage*.

As for Latournelle, imagine a good little man, as crafty as the purest probity permits. Any stranger seeing this odd physiognomy, which is so familiar to Havre, would take him for a sharper. A weak vision forced the worthy notary to wear green glasses to protect his eyes, which were always inflamed. Each eyebrow, ornamented with very little hair, surrounded the line of the brown shell frame of the glasses and made a double circle about his

eyes. If you have never observed the effect produced by these two circumferences placed one above the other, upon the face of some passer-by, you cannot imagine how such a face misleads you, especially when pale and wrinkled and ending in a point like that of Mephistopheles—a type which painters give to cats. Such is the picture offered by Babylas Latournelle. Above those atrocious glasses a bald head rises, all the more fantastic because of the wig which covers it. This wig seems to be endowed with motion and is never in the same place; it allows the white locks to show on all sides and is cut very unequally in front. Seeing this estimable Norman dressed in black like a coleopter, mounted on two legs like two pins, and knowing him to be the most honest fellow in the world, one looks in vain for the reason of these misleading physiognomic traits.

Jean Butscha, the poor natural child abandoned by his parents, whom the recorder Labrosse and his daughter had taken care of, was now head clerk in the notary's office by virtue of hard work. He slept and ate at his patron's house and received nine hundred francs salary. With no semblance of youth, and almost a dwarf, Jean made Modeste his idol, indeed he would have given his life for her. This poor creature, marked by small-pox, whose eyes, pressed between their thick lids, seemed like two touch-holes of a cannon, with frizzly hair flattened on his square head, and embarrassed by enormous hands, had lived since he was seven years

old under the eye of charity—is not this amply sufficient to explain his whole being to you? Silent, reserved, of exemplary conduct, religiously inclined, he traveled in that immense expanse called upon the map of the heart: Love-without-Hope, the arid and sublime steppes of Desire. Modeste had nicknamed this grotesque little clerk her *Black Dwarf.* This sobriquet made Butscha read Walter Scott's romance and he said to Modeste:

"Would you like to have a rose from your mysterious *dwarf* for the day of danger?"

Modeste forthwith plunged the soul of her adorer into his slough of despond by one of those terrible looks which young girls throw on men who do not please them. Butscha nicknamed himself the *clerc obscur* without knowing that this joke had its origin in the scutcheons; for like his patroness he had never been out of Havre.

Perhaps it is necessary, in the interest of those who do not know Havre, to say a word in explanation of where the Latournelle family was going, for the head clerk is evidently included in this family. Ingouville is to Havre what Montmartre is to Paris, a high hill at the foot of which the city spreads itself, with this difference, that the sea and the Seine surround the city and the hill; that Havre finds itself fatally circumscribed by close fortifications and that the mouth of the river, the port, the basins, present a very different spectacle from the fifty thousand houses of Paris. At the foot of Montmartre rises an ocean of slate roofs with its seeming,

motionless blue billows; at Ingouville one sees, as it were, the mobile billows stirred by the winds. This eminence, which from Rouen to the sea coasts the river, leaves a margin more or less narrow between it and the waters. It, however, certainly contains the treasures of the picturesque, with its villages, gorges, dales, and fields and it acquired an immense value at Ingouville after 1816, the date when the prosperity of Havre began.

This district became the Auteuil, the Ville-d'Avray, the Montmorency of the merchants, who built their villas one above the other on this amphitheatre, to breathe the air of the sea perfumed by the flowers of their sumptuous gardens. These daring speculators rested here after the fatigues of their counting-rooms, and of the atmosphere of their city houses crowded one against the other without space, often without courtyards, as the increase of the population of Havre, the inflexible lines of its ramparts, and the aggrandizements of the docks compelled them. Indeed what sadness seemed to rest in the heart of Havre and what joy at Ingouville! The law of social development has caused the Faubourg de Graville to spring up as a mushroom; to-day, more considerable than Havre, it extends at the foot of its slope like a serpent. On the ridge, Ingouville has only one street and, as in all such cases, the houses which look toward the Seine have an immense advantage over those on the other side of the way, whose view they obstruct, and they have the air of standing on tiptoe like spectators

to see over the roofs opposite. Nevertheless, there exist here, as elsewhere, certain servitudes. Some houses situated on the summit occupy a superior position or enjoy a legal right to the view, which obliges the neighbor to build his house only to a given height. Then the capricious rock is hollowed by roads which render the amphitheatre habitable, and by these means some of the estates obtain a view of the city, the river or the sea. Instead of being cut perpendicularly, the hill ends abruptly in a cliff. At the end of the street which winds to the summit the ravines are seen where several villages are situated, Sainte-Adresse,—two or three Saints, I don't know whom,—and the creeks where the ocean's roar is heard. This almost deserted side of Ingouville forms a striking contrast to the beautiful villas in the valley of the Seine. Do they fear the winds for their vegetation?—Whatever it may be, the tourist on the steamboats is astonished to find the side of Ingouville to the west, naked and barren, like a poor man in rags beside a rich one sumptuously dressed and perfumed.

In 1829 one of the last houses on the ocean side, and which no doubt now stands about the middle of Ingouville, was called, and is perhaps still, *The Chalet*. It was formerly a porter's lodge with a little garden in front. The owner of the villa to which it belonged—a house with a park, gardens, aviaries, hot-houses and meadows—took a fancy to put this little house more in keeping with the splendors of his own abode and reconstruct it as a model

cottage. He separated this cottage from his own lawn ornamented with flower beds, which formed the terrace of his villa, by a low wall, along the length of which he planted a hedge to conceal it. Behind the cottage, called in spite of him the Chalet, extended orchards and kitchen gardens. This chalet, which had neither cows nor dairy, had, as enclosure from the highway, only a wooden fence covered with a luxuriant hedge. On the other side of the way, the house opposite,—subject to some rights of other parties,—had the same kind of fence and hedge which allowed the chalet a view of Havre. This little house was the despair of Monsieur Vilquin, the owner of the villa; and this is the reason. The creator of this place, every detail of which cried aloud: *"Behold our millions!"* had extended his park far enough toward the country so that, as he said, "his gardeners could not be in his pockets," and that when finished, the chalet could only be occupied by a friend. Monsieur Mignon, the former owner, was very fond of his cashier and this story will prove that Dumay returned his affection; he therefore offered him this dwelling. A stickler for form, Dumay insisted on signing a lease for twelve years at three hundred francs' rent to his employer and Monsieur Mignon signed it willingly, saying:

"My dear Dumay, remember that you promise to live with me for twelve years."

On account of certain events, which will soon be related, the property of Monsieur Mignon, formerly

the richest merchant of Havre, was sold to Vilquin, one of his fellow competitors. In the joy of coming into possession of the celebrated Mignon villa he forgot to demand the canceling of this lease. Dumay, in order not to lose the sale, would have signed anything that Vilquin had required, but the sale once made, he held to his lease with a vengeance. He remained, as it were, in Vilquin's pocket, in the heart of the Vilquin family, watching Vilquin, worrying Vilquin, the veritable gad-fly of the Vilquins. Every morning, Vilquin experienced great annoyance in seeing that jewel of construction from his window, that chalet which cost sixty thousand francs and glittered in the sun like a ruby,—which by the way is not a bad comparison. The architect had built this cottage of the reddest brick, pointed in white. The window frames were painted a bright green, and the woodwork a yellowish brown. The roof overhung several feet. A pretty open-work gallery surmounts the first floor and in the middle of the façade projects a veranda with glass sides. The ground floor contained a salon and a dining-room, separated from each other by the landing of a wooden staircase, the design and ornament of which is of elegant simplicity. The kitchen is behind the dining-room, the room corresponding is used as the bed-chamber of Monsieur and Madame Dumay. On the next floor, the architect has provided two large sleeping-rooms with dressing-rooms attached, to which the veranda serves as a salon; then above, under the eaves, which resemble two

cards put one against the other, two servants' rooms, lighted by a round window in the mansard roof, but quite spacious.

Vilquin had been petty enough to build a wall on the side toward the orchard and kitchen garden, and, on account of this meanness, the few square yards which the lease left to the Chalet resembled a Parisian garden. The outbuildings, constructed and painted in a manner to correspond with the Chalet, are set against the wall of the adjoining property. The interior of this charming habitation is in harmony with the exterior. The drawing-room, with its floor inlaid entirely with iron-wood, presents the wonders of a painting in miniature of Chinese lacquer. Many-colored birds, impossible green foliage, and fantastic Chinese designs shine out from a black background framed in gold. The dining-room is entirely covered with carved Baltic wood, sculptured as in the beautiful Russian cottages. The small antechamber formed by the landing and the staircase wall is painted like old wood to represent Gothic designs. The bed-chambers, hung in chintz, are beautiful in their costly simplicity. The room in which the cashier and his wife slept, is wainscoted and ceiled like the cabin of a steamboat. These caprices of the owner explain Vilquin's rage; he would have liked this cottage for his daughter and son-in-law to live in. This project being known to Dumay may later explain his Breton tenacity.

The entrance to the Chalet was through a small

door covered with iron lattice-work, the iron spikes of which were some inches higher than the fence and hedge. The little garden, equal in size to an ostentatious lawn, was now full of flowers, roses, dahlias, the most beautiful and rarest productions of the greenhouses; for the lovely little greenhouse was still another subject of Vilquin's unrest, the tasteful conservatory, the so-called conservatory of madame, belongs to the Chalet and separates the Vilquin villa from it, or, if you prefer, unites it to the cottage. Dumay took his relaxation from his account-books by caring for this conservatory, the exotic productions of which made one of Modeste's chief pleasures.

The billiard-room of the Vilquin villa, a kind of gallery, formerly communicated with this conservatory by an immense aviary in the form of a tower, but since the construction of the wall which deprived him of the view of the orchard Dumay had walled up this communicating door.

"Wall for wall," he said.

"You and Dumay fight each other with walls!" said the merchants to Vilquin, to tease him, and every day on Change the jealous speculator was saluted with a new pleasantry.

In 1827, Vilquin offered Dumay a salary of six thousand francs and ten thousand francs indemnity to cancel the lease, but the cashier refused, although he had only a thousand crowns from Gobenheim, an old clerk of his captain. Dumay was, believe me, a Breton planted by fate in Normandy. Imagine

then the hatred of this Norman Vilquin for the tenants of the Chalet; Vilquin worth his three millions! What a crime of treachery to millions, thus to demonstrate to the rich the impotency of gold! Vilquin, whose despair made him the talk of Havre, had just proposed and Dumay had again refused, the entire ownership of a pretty residence. Havre began to grow uneasy over this obstinacy, the reason of which many persons found in this phrase: "Dumay is a Breton." The cashier felt that Madame Mignon, and still more, Mademoiselle Modeste, would have been too badly situated anywhere else.

His two idols dwelt in a temple worthy of them, and at least preserved in this sumptuous cottage, in which fallen kings could have kept the majesty of surroundings, a sort of decorum which is often wanting to those who have been reduced. Perhaps the reader will not regret having known in advance both Modeste's place of abode and her habitual society; for at her age, people and things have as much influence upon the future as disposition has, even if the character does not receive any indelible impressions from them.

*

From the manner in which the Latournelles entered the Chalet, a stranger might well have supposed that they went there every evening.

"Here already, sir!" said the notary, when, in in the salon, he noticed Gobenheim, a young banker of Havre, a relative of Gobenheim-Keller, the head of the large Paris house.

This young man with a livid face, one of those blonds with black eyes in whose fixed look there is something fascinating, as temperate in his speech as in his living, clothed in black, thin as a consumptive, but with a strong frame, cultivated the family of his former master and his cashier's house much less from affection than calculation. They played whist there for two cents a point, and full dress was not necessary. He accepted only glasses of sugared water and was not obliged to return any civilities in exchange. This apparent devotion to the Mignons led people to believe that Gobenheim was in love and exempted him from going into society in Havre, from making a thousand useless expenditures, and from disarranging the economy of his domestic life. This worshiper of the golden calf went to bed every night at half-past ten and rose at five o'clock in the morning. Sure of the discretion of Latournelle and Butscha, Gobenheim could analyze knotty questions before them, submit them

to the gratuitous advice of the lawyer and reduce the idle stories of the town to their true valuation. This young "gobbler-of-gold" as Butscha called him, belonged to that class of bodies which chemistry calls absorbents. Since the catastrophe which overwhelmed the house of Mignon, where he had been placed by the Kellers to learn maritime commerce, no one at the Chalet had ever asked him to do anything for him, not even a simple commission; his reply was known. This fellow regarded Modeste as he would have examined a lithograph worth two cents.

"He is one of the pistons of that immense machine called Commerce," poor Butscha, whose intelligence betrayed itself by words timidly thrown out, said of him.

The four Latournelles, with the most respectful deference greeted an elderly lady dressed in black velvet, who did not rise from the arm-chair in which she was seated, both her eyes being covered with the yellow film produced by cataracts. Madame Mignon may be described in a single phrase. She attracted notice at once by her noble look of the mother of a family whose reproachless life defies the blows of destiny, but whom, nevertheless, it has taken as the target for its arrows; she was of those who form the numerous tribe of Niobes. Her white hair, carefully brushed and curled, became her cold, white face, like those of the burgomasters' wives, painted by Mirevelt. The excessive care of her toilet, the velvet shoes, the lace collar, the carefully

arranged shawl, everything showed Modeste's solicitude for her mother.

When the moment of silence mentioned by the notary, occurred in the pretty drawing-room, Modeste, who was seated near her mother embroidering a fichu for her, became the object of attention. This curiosity hidden under the common questions which every one asks when making a call, and even those who see each other every day, would have betrayed to an indifferent person the domestic plot meditated against the young girl; but Gobenheim, more than indifferent, remarked nothing. He busied himself lighting the candles on the card-table. Dumay's attitude made this situation terrible for Butscha, for the Latournelles and especially for Madame Dumay, who knew that her husband was capable of shooting Modeste's lover as he would a mad dog. After dinner the cashier had gone to walk followed by two immense Pyrenean dogs, which he suspected of treachery and had left at an old farm of Monsieur Mignon; then, a few moments before the Latournelles arrived, he had taken his pistols from his bedside and placed them on the chimney-piece without the knowledge of Modeste. The young girl did not pay the least attention to all these preparations, which were at least peculiar.

Although short, thickset, pock-marked, with a very low voice and an air of listening to himself, this Breton, a former lieutenant of the guard, presented such resolution, such courage plainly written on his face, that during twenty years in the army no

one had ever dared to joke him. His small calm blue eyes resembled two pieces of steel. His manner, the expression of his face, his speech, his bearing—all were in accord with his short name—Dumay. Besides, his well-known strength caused him to dread no aggression. He was capable of killing a man with a blow of his fist, indeed he had done this great feat at Bautzen, when he found himself behind his company, unarmed and face to face with a Saxon.

Just now the firm and gentle expression of the man had reached a tragical sublimity; his lips, pale as his skin, indicated an inward convulsion controlled by his Breton energy; a slight moisture which everyone saw and supposed to be cold, made his forehead wet. The lawyer knew from all this that a tragedy in the Court of Assizes might be the result. In short, the cashier was playing, on account of Modeste Mignon, a part in which were engaged honor and faith—sentiments of an importance superior to those of mere social bonds, and resulting from one of those compacts of which, in case of tragedy, Heaven alone can be judge.

Most dramas exist in the ideas which we form about things. The events which seem dramatic to us are but the subjects which our own minds convert into tragedy or comedy according to the bent of our natures.

Madame Latournelle and Madame Dumay, charged to observe Modeste, showed something unnatural in their manner, a trembling of the voice, which the

accused did not notice in the least, so much was she absorbed in her embroidery.

Modeste placed every needle full of cotton with such accurate precision as to be the despair of all embroiderers. Her face expressed the pleasure she received in embroidering a petal which finished the flower she was making. The dwarf, seated between his master and Gobenheim and barely restraining his tears, considered how he could reach Modeste in order to whisper two words of advice in her ear. In taking her place before Madame Mignon, Madame Latournelle had, with the diabolical intelligence of a bigot, isolated Modeste. Madame Mignon, silent from her blindness, paler than was her custom, also showed that she knew the trial to which Modeste was to be subjected. Perhaps at this last moment she blamed herself for this stratagem, although she had found it necessary. Hence her silence—her heart wept.

Exupère, the trigger of the trap, was entirely ignorant of the piece in which chance had given him a part. Gobenheim, through his natural characteristics, remained in a state of indifference equal to that shown by Modeste. This contrast between the complete ignorance of some, and the agitated attention of others would have been interesting to a well-informed onlooker. Authors make use of these effects to-day more than ever and with good reason; as nature at all times is stronger than they. Here you will see social nature, which is a nature within nature, providing itself the pleasure of making a

story more interesting than a romance, just as the torrents trace fancies forbidden to painters and accomplish feats by arranging and wearing away stones to the surprise of sculptors and architects.

It was eight o'clock and the twilight at this season was already fading. There was not a cloud in the sky, the balmy air caressed the earth, the flowers gave forth their richest perfumes, and in the stillness the gravel could be heard crushing under the footsteps of the returning promenaders. The sea shone like a mirror, there was so little air stirring that the flames of the candles lighted on the card-table burned steadily, although the windows were wide open.

The room, the evening, the dwelling, what a frame for the portrait of the young girl then being studied with the profound attention of a painter before the *Margherita Doni*, one of the glories of the Pitti Palace. Was Modeste, a flower shut up like that of Catullus, worth all these precautions? You have seen the cage, now behold the bird.

Twenty years old, slender, exquisite as one of those sirens invented by the English designers for their *Books of Beauties*, Modeste presents, as her mother did once, a coquettish expression, the charm of which is so little understood in France, where it is called sentimentality, but which with the Germans is the poetry of the heart surging to the surface; which in foolish people overflows in affectation, while it gives to intelligent young girls an exquisite charm of manner. Remarkable

for her hair, which is of a pale golden color, she belongs to that class of women known, doubtless in memory of Eve, as celestial blonds, whose satin skin seems like a silky paper laid upon the flesh, which quivers at a cold look, or brightens at a sunny glance, and makes the hand envious to touch what the eye can see. Beneath her hair, light as down and curled in ringlets, her forehead, so purely modeled that it might have been traced with a compass, rests serene, calm almost to placidness, although thoughtfully intelligent. Where could one find a forehead more harmonious or of more transparent clearness? It seemed to have a lustre like that of a pearl. Her eyes, blue bordering on gray, showed both a love of mischief and innocence, in harmony with her arching eyebrows, as regular as those made by one stroke of the brush in Chinese paintings of faces. This spirituelle candor is further enhanced by the blue veins which show in the mother-of-pearl tints around her eyes and temples, a privilege of delicate skins. Her face, of that oval so often used by Raphael for his Madonnas, is distinguished by the maidenly color of the cheeks, as delicate as the rose of Bengal, and upon which the long eyelashes of her transparent eyelids throw shadows mingled with lights. Her small neck, white as milk, recalls the fleeting lines loved by Leonardo da Vinci. A few tiny freckles, like the patches of the eighteenth century, show that Modeste is indeed a being of the earth, and not one of those creations dreamed of in Italy by the school

of Fra Angelico. Her lips a little roguish, both dainty and full at the same time, express voluptuousness. Her waist supple without being frail, will not distress her motherhood, like those of the young girls whose pretty figures are due to the morbid pressure of corsets. The cloth and steel refined but did not manufacture the serpentine lines of this elegance comparable to that of a young poplar swayed by the wind. Her dress, which was of pearl-gray trimmed with cherry-red, and made with a long waist, delicately defined her bust and covered her shoulders, still rather thin, while a chemisette only permitted a view of the first curves of the throat where it joins the shoulders. Looking at this face, both ethereal and intelligent, where the delicacy of a Grecian nose with rosy, clear-cut nostrils denoted a positive nature; where the poetry which dominated the almost mystical forehead was half belied by the voluptuous expression of the mouth; where candor disputed the deep and varied expression of the eye with one of irony—an observer would have felt that this young girl with her quick and firm hearing alert to every sound, with her nostrils open to catch the fragrance of the celestial flower of the Ideal, was destined to be the stage on which would be played the drama between the poetry which surrounds every sunrise and the labors of the day; between Fancy and Reality. Modeste was the pure and modest young girl, knowing her destiny, yet full of chastity—the Virgin of Spain rather than the Madonna of Raphael.

She raised her head as she heard Dumay say to Exupère, "Come here, young man," and when she saw them talking in the corner of the drawing-room she thought it was concerning some commission in Paris.

She looked at the friends about her, astonished at their silence, and exclaimed in the most natural voice: "Well, are you not going to play?" as she pointed to the green table which Madame Latournelle called the *altar*.

"Let us play," said Dumay, who had just sent young Exupère away.

"Sit here, Butscha," said Madame Latournelle, thus separating the clerk, by the length of the table, from Madame Mignon and her daughter.

"And you come here," said Dumay to his wife, as he ordered her to keep near him.

Madame Dumay, a little American thirty-six years old, secretly wiped away her tears; she adored Modeste and feared some catastrophe.

"You are not gay this evening," said Modeste.

"We are playing," replied Gobenheim, as he arranged his cards.

However interesting this situation may appear, it will be more so after explaining the position of Dumay toward Modeste. If the conciseness of this explanation renders it dry, the reader will pardon this dryness in favor of the wish to finish the scene rapidly and understand the necessity of relating the argument which regulates all dramas.

*

Dumay — Anne - François - Bernard — born at Vannes, set out in 1799 as a soldier to the army in Italy. His father, president of the revolutionary tribunal, had made himself so prominent by his zeal, that the country was no longer the place for Dumay when his father, a pettifogging lawyer, perished on the scaffold after the 9th Thermidor. After having seen his mother die of sorrow, Anne sold everything he possessed, and at the age of twenty-two ran away to Italy at the moment when our armies yielded. He met in the Department of Var a young man, who for like motives, was also seeking glory, finding the field of battle less perilous than Provence.

The father of Charles Mignon, the last scion of that family to which Paris owes the street and hotel built by Cardinal Mignon, was an artful man who desired to save from the grasp of the Revolution the estate of La Bastie, a pretty fief in Comtat. Like all timid persons at this time, the Count de la Bastie, having become the citizen Mignon, found it more salutary to cut off the heads of others than to allow his own to be cut off. This false Terrorist disappeared in the 9th Thermidor and was then enrolled upon the list of refugees. The estate of La Bastie was sold and the dishonored château had its turrets razed to the ground. Finally citizen Mignon,

discovered at Orange, was massacred with his wife and children with the exception of Charles Mignon, who had been sent to find an asylum in the High-Alps. Overwhelmed with this terrible blow, Charles waited for a less stormy time in the valley of Mont Genevra. There he lived until 1799 on a few louis which his father had put in his hand upon leaving him. At last when he was twenty-three years old, without other fortune than his fine, noble bearing and that southern beauty, which, when perfect, reaches sublimity,—of which Antinous, the favorite of Adrian, is the type,—Charles resolved to hazard upon the red carpet of war his southern audacity, which like many others he took for a vocation. He met the Breton as he was going to the seat of the army at Nice. Having become comrades through the similarity of their destiny and through the contrast of their characters, these two soldiers drank from the same cup at the gushing torrent, divided the same piece of bread and found themselves sergeants at the peace which followed the Battle of Marengo. When the war began again, Charles Mignon went into the cavalry and then lost sight of his comrade. The last of the Mignons of La Bastie was, in 1812, an officer of the Legion of Honor and major of a regiment of cavalry, and hoped to be recreated count of La Bastie and made a colonel by the Emperor. Being captured by the Russians, he was sent, like many others, to Siberia.

He made the journey with a poor lieutenant in whom he recognized Anne Dumay, brave, unhappy

and undecorated, like a million foot-soldiers with worsted epaulettes, the rank and file,—that canvas of men upon which Napoléon has painted the picture of the Empire. To kill time in Siberia, the lieutenant-colonel taught the Breton writing and arithmetic, as his father Scévola had considered education useless. Charles found in his first traveling companion one of those rare hearts into which he could pour all his sorrows while telling his happiness. The son of Provence had finished by meeting the fate which awaits all handsome bachelors. In 1804, at Frankfort-on-the-Main, he became the adored of Bettina Wallenrod, the only daughter of a banker, and he had married her with all the more enthusiasm since she was rich and one of the beauties of the town, and he only a lieutenant without other fortune than the exceedingly problematical future of the military men of that time. The old Wallenrod, a German baron who had fallen from his rank,—banking and the baronage are inseparable—delighted to know that the handsome lieutenant was the sole representative of the Mignons of La Bastie, approved of the love of the blond Bettina, whom a painter—there was one at that time in Frankfort—had asked to pose for an ideal statue of Germany. Wallenrod designated in advance his grandsons as the Counts of La Bastie-Wallenrod, and placed in French securities the necessary sum to give his daughter an income of thirty thousand francs. This dowry made a very small hole in his cash-box, taking into account the small amount

of capital required at that time. The Empire pursued a policy adopted by many debtors and rarely paid its dividends, therefore Charles was frightened at this investment, as he had not so much faith in the Imperial eagle as the German baron. The phenomenon of faith, or admiration which is only an ephemeral faith, is established with difficulty when we are brought into close relation with the idol. The engineer suspects the machine which the traveler admires, and the officers were in some measure the stokers of the Napoléonic locomotive if they were not its fuel. Baron Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild promised, if necessary, to come to the aid of the household. Charles loved Bettina Wallenrod as much as he was loved by her, which is saying a great deal; but when a Provençal is enthusiastic, everything becomes natural in regard to sentiment. And how could he fail to adore a blond escaped from one of Albert Dürer's pictures, of an angelic disposition and a fortune which was notable at Frankfort?

Charles had four children, of whom only two daughters remained at the time when he poured his sorrows into the ear of the Breton. Without knowing them, Dumay loved these two little ones from the effect of that sympathy so well understood by Charles, which makes a soldier the father of all children. The elder, called Bettina-Caroline, was born in 1805; the other, Marie-Modeste, in 1808. The unfortunate lieutenant-colonel, having no news from these beloved beings, returned home on foot through

Russia and Prussia in 1814, with the lieutenant. These two friends, with whom the difference in epaulettes did not count, reached Frankfort at the time that Napoléon landed at Cannes. Charles found his wife at Frankfort, but in mourning. She had had the sorrow of losing her father, by whom she was so loved that he wished to see her always smiling—even at his death-bed. The old Wallenrod did not survive the disasters of the Empire. At seventy-two, he had speculated in cotton, believing in the genius of Napoléon, without realizing that genius is as often above, as below current events. This last Wallenrod, one of the true Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstilds, had bought almost as many bales of cotton as the Emperor had lost men, during his marvelous campaign in France.

"I tie in ze goten!" this father—a father of the Goriot type—said to his daughter, in striving to mitigate a sorrow which terrified him. "I tie owing nobody nodings." This Frenchman of Germany died trying to speak the language beloved by his daughter.

Happy to have saved his wife and two daughters from the general wreck. Charles Mignon returned to Paris, where the Emperor made him lieutenant-colonel of the cuirassiers of the guard and a commander of the Legion of Honor. The dream of the colonel to see himself general and count at the first triumph of Napoléon, vanished in the flood of blood at Waterloo. The colonel, slightly wounded, fell

back upon the Loire and left Tours before the troops disbanded.

In the spring of 1816, Charles disposed of his income of thirty thousand francs from government securities, which gave him about four hundred thousand francs, and resolved to go to America to make a fortune, abandoning the country where persecution already weighed upon Napoléon's soldiers. He went from Paris to Havre, accompanied by Dumay, whose life he had saved by mounting him behind him in the midst of the turmoil which followed the day at Waterloo. Dumay shared the opinions and discouragements of the colonel. Charles was followed by the Breton as though by a faithful dog, and the poor soldier idolized the two little girls. The colonel saw that, with the obedience and habits of the guard-room, and the probity and attachment of the lieutenant, he would make a faithful as well as useful servant for him, so he proposed to Dumay that he should put himself as a civilian under his orders. Dumay was very happy to be adopted by a family to whom he resolved to cling like the mistletoe to the oak. While waiting for an opportunity to embark, choosing between the vessels and meditating upon the chances offered by their destinations, the colonel heard much said of the brilliant destiny which the peace promised for Havre. Listening to the conversation of two citizens, he saw the means of fortune and he became at one and the same time a ship-owner, a land-owner and a banker. He bought two hundred thousand

francs' worth of land and houses, and dispatched a vessel to New York, laden with a cargo of French silks, bought for a low price at Lyons. His agent Dumay went with the ship. While the colonel installed himself and family in one of the most beautiful houses of the Rue Royale, and learned the principles of banking, in which he displayed the activity and the marvelous intelligence of the people of Provence, Dumay made two fortunes, for he returned with a cargo of cotton bought at a ridiculously low price. This double operation was worth an enormous capital to the house of Mignon. The colonel bought the villa at Ingouville and rewarded Dumay by giving him a modest house on the Rue Royale. The poor Breton had brought from New York, along with the cotton, a pretty little wife who had a weakness for French characteristics. Miss Grummer was worth about four thousand dollars, twenty thousand francs, which Dumay invested with the colonel. Dumay, having become the *alter ego* of the ship-owner, learned in a short time to take charge of the books, that science which, according to him, distinguished the sergeant-majors of commerce. This simple-minded soldier, having been forgotten by fortune for twenty years, thought himself the happiest fellow in the world on finding himself the owner of a house prettily furnished through the generosity of his chief, twelve hundred francs in dividends from investments and a salary of three thousand six hundred francs. Even in his dreams, Lieutenant Dumay had never hoped for

such a position; but he was still better satisfied to find himself the pivot of the largest commercial house in Havre. Madame Dumay had experienced the grief of losing all her children at their birth, and the sufferings of her last confinement had deprived her of all hope of more; she therefore had attached herself to the two Mignon daughters with almost as much devotion as Dumay, who even preferred them to his own children. Madame Dumay, whose parents had been farmers, was accustomed to a life of economy, and she contented herself with two thousand four hundred francs a year for herself and house. Thus every year Dumay placed two thousand and some hundred francs more in the house of Mignon. When the master examined the balance-sheet, he added to the cashier's account a present in keeping with his services. In 1824, the cashier's credit amounted to fifty-eight thousand francs. It was at that time that Charles Mignon, Comte de la Bastie,—a title which was never mentioned, overwhelmed the cashier by giving him as a residence the Chalet, where Modeste and her mother now live in quiet retirement. The deplorable condition in which we find Madame Mignon, whom her husband had left still beautiful, has its cause in the catastrophe to which Charles's absence is due. It had taken three years of sorrow to destroy this beautiful German woman, but it was a grief like the worm at the core of the fruit. It is easy to sum up the causes. Two children who died at an early age had a double grave in this heart which did not know

how to forget, and the captivity of her husband in Siberia was a living death to this loving wife. The downfall of the wealthy house of Wallenrod, and the death of the poor banker, leaving his coffers empty, was like a mortal blow in the midst of Bettina's doubts about her husband's fate. This tender German flower barely escaped dying from the excessive joy of Charles's return. Then the second fall of the Empire and the anticipated expatriation were new accessions of the same fever. But ten years of continual prosperity, the gaieties of her house, the handsomest in Havre, the dinners, balls, fêtes of the successful merchant, the sumptuousness of the villa Mignon, the immense consideration and respectful esteem which Charles enjoyed, the absolute devotion of her husband, who responded to a unique love with a love as unique:—all these had reconciled the poor woman to life. At last when her fears left her, when she foresaw a beautiful evening to her stormy day, a disaster which was not known, but which lay buried in the heart of the family, and of which we shall soon speak, became the consummation of her misfortunes.

In January, 1826, in the midst of a fête, when Havre had unanimously chosen Charles Mignon as its deputy, three letters arriving from New York, Paris and London had fallen as so many blows of a hammer upon his crystal palace of Prosperity. In ten minutes Ruin with its vulture wings, had lighted upon this unheard-of happiness, as the cold settled upon the great army in 1812. In one night spent

with Dumay and his books, Charles Mignon had decided what to do. All his property, without even excepting the furniture, would be required in order to pay his debts.

"Havre," said the lieutenant-colonel, "shall never see me abased. Dumay, I will take your sixty thousand francs at six per cent."

"At three, my dear colonel."

"Then I will not take them at all," replied the colonel, peremptorily. "I will give you your share in my new business. *The Modeste*, which no longer belongs to me, sails to-morrow and I shall go with the captain. I leave my wife and daughter in your care. Do not expect to hear from me, no news must be taken for good news."

Dumay, always the lieutenant, did not ask his colonel a single question about his projects. "I think," he said to Latournelle, with a wise air, "that the colonel has his plans laid."

The next day he accompanied his master upon the ship *The Modeste* sailing for Constantinople. There on the stern of the ship, the Breton asked:

"What are your last orders, my colonel?"

"Let no man approach the Chalet!" the father exclaimed, suppressing his tears with difficulty.

"Dumay, guard my last child for me as a bulldog would guard her. Death to the man who would try to ruin my second daughter! Fear nothing, not even the scaffold. I will join you there."

"My dear colonel, go your way in peace, I understand you. You will either find Mademoiselle

Modeste as you have confided her to me, or I will be dead. You know me and you know our two Pyrenean dogs. No man can reach your daughter. Pardon me for having said so much."

The two soldiers threw themselves into each other's arms, as two men may who have tested each other in the wilds of Siberia.

The same day, the *Courrier du Havre* published this simple, terrible, energetic and honest leading article:

The house of Charles Mignon suspends payment. The undersigned liquidators undertake to pay all liabilities. On and after this date, all bills of exchange can be cashed to the third holders. The sale of the landed property will fully cover all current accounts.

This notice is given for the honor of the house, and to prevent any disturbance of credits upon the Exchange of Havre.

Monsieur Charles Mignon left this morning on *The Modeste* for Asia Minor, having left full powers to effect the sale of all his property, even of real estate.

DUMAY, assignee for the bank accounts.
LATOURNELLE, notary, assignee for the city and country estates.
GOBENHEIM, assignee for commercial securities.

Latournelle owed his fortune to Monsieur Mignon's kindness, for in 1817 he loaned him a hundred thousand francs with which to buy the best practice in Havre. This poor man, having no pecuniary means, had been head clerk for ten years. He was now forty years old and believed he was to remain a head clerk for the remainder of his days.

He was the only one in all Havre whose devotion compared to that of Dumay, for Gobenheim profited by the liquidation to continue the business of Monsieur Mignon, which enabled him to increase his own banking business. While unanimous regrets were expressed at the Bourse, on the wharves, and in domestic circles, while praises for such an irreproachable, honorable and well-meaning man filled all mouths, Latournelle and Dumay, silent and active as two ants, made sales, collected money, paid off liabilities and closed up the business. Vilquin played the generous part in buying the villa, the town house and a farm, Latournelle profiting by this in getting a good price from him. People wished to call on Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, but they had obeyed Charles by taking refuge in the Chalet the very morning of his departure, the exact hour of which had been concealed from them. In order not to be shaken in his resolve by his grief, the brave banker had kissed his wife and daughter while they slept. There were three hundred visiting cards sent to the house of the Mignons. Two weeks later, just as Charles had predicted, they were entirely forgotten, which convinced these two women of the wisdom and dignity of the command. Dumay had his master represented in New York, London and Paris. He followed up the liquidation of the three banking-houses to which this failure was due, and from 1826 to 1828 he realized five hundred thousand francs, the eighth part of Charles's fortune, and according to his

written orders the night of his departure, he sent it, in the beginning of the year 1828, through the Mongenod house, to New York to be placed to the credit of Monsieur Mignon. All this was done with military obedience, except as to withholding thirty thousand francs for the personal needs of Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, which Charles had commanded but which Dumay did not do. The Breton sold his house in town for twenty thousand francs and put it to the credit of Madame Mignon, thinking that the more capital the colonel had, the sooner he would return.

"People have been known to perish for lack of thirty thousand francs," he said to Latournelle, who had taken the house from him at his own valuation, and where the inmates of the Chalet always found a room.

Such, for the celebrated Mignon House, was the result of the crisis which from 1825 to 1826 ruined some of the principal places of business and wrecked several Parisian bankers, among whom—as some may remember—was the president of the Chamber of Commerce.

One can well understand that this immense disaster, crowning a bourgeois reign of ten years, might be the death-blow to Bettina Wallenrod, who again saw herself separated from her husband without knowing his fate, which seemed as perilous and adventurous to her as his exile in Siberia. But the sorrow which dragged her to the grave was to these visible sorrows what the misled child of the family,

who destroys its happiness, is to ordinary trials. The last stone thrown at the heart of this poor mother was the stone in the little graveyard at Ingouville upon which was inscribed:

BETTINA-CAROLINE MIGNON

DIED AGED TWENTY-TWO YEARS.

PRAY FOR HER!

1827.

This inscription is, for the young girl, what many an epitaph is for the dead,—the table of contents of an unknown book. Here then is the book in its terrible brevity, which will explain the oath exchanged between the colonel and the lieutenant in their adieus.

A charming young man named Georges d'Estourny, came to Havre under the natural pretext of seeing the sea and there he saw Caroline Mignon. An elegant, entertaining Parisian is never without recommendations. He was invited through the intervention of a friend of the Mignons, to a fête given at Ingouville. Very much attracted by both Caroline and her fortune, the Parisian foresaw a happy ending to the meeting. In three months he had used all his seductive powers and Caroline disappeared. When there are daughters in a family, a father ought no more to allow a young man

whom he does not know to be introduced to his house, than to leave papers and books about without reading them first himself. The innocence of maidens is like milk, which turns sour at the sound of thunder, a poisonous perfume, warm weather or even a breath. After reading the farewell letter of his elder daughter, Charles Mignon had Madame Dumay set out at once for Paris and the family alleged that this sudden journey had been ordered by the family physician, who affirmed this necessary excuse; but, nevertheless, they could not prevent some gossip at Havre about this absence.

"How can it be that such a strong young girl, with a Spanish complexion and jet black hair!—she a consumptive!"—

"Yes, they say that she was imprudent—"

"Ah! ah!" cried a Vilquin.

"She came in bathed in perspiration from a horseback ride and drank ice water; at least that is what Doctor Troussenard says."

When Madame Dumay came back from Paris, the failure of the Mignon House had taken place and no one paid any further attention to the absence of Caroline nor to the return of the cashier's wife.

In the beginning of the year 1827, the papers were full of the suit against Georges d'Estourny, accused of cheating at cards, by the correctional police. This young corsair exiled himself without troubling about Mademoiselle Mignon, as the news of the failure of her father had rendered her valueless in his eyes. In a short time, Caroline learned

of his infamous desertion and the ruin of her paternal house. Having returned to the Chalet in a state of desperate illness she died in a few days, and her death at least shielded her reputation.

People believed now in the illness which Monsieur Mignon had alleged at the time of his daughter's flight, and in the doctor's order, which was said to have sent Mademoiselle Caroline to Nice. Up to the last moment the mother had hoped to save her daughter. Bettina was her favorite as Modeste was the favorite of Charles. There was something touching in these two preferences. Bettina was the image of Charles as Modeste was of her mother. This devoted couple perpetuated their love for each other in their children. Caroline, daughter of Provence, inherited from her father that beautiful hair, black as a raven's wing, which we admire in Southern women, deep almond-shaped brown eyes as brilliant as stars, an olive complexion, velvety skin like ripe fruit, an arched instep and a Spanish figure on which the short skirts set crisply. Both the father and mother were proud of the extreme opposites of the two sisters.

"A devil and an angel," they said jestingly; however, it become a prophecy. After weeping for a month in her room, where she would see no one, the poor German mother came out with her eyes seriously injured. Before losing her sight entirely she went to see Caroline's grave, contrary to the wishes of all her friends. This last image remained distinct in the darkness which surrounded her, as a

red outline of the last object seen remains in the vision when we close our eyes in bright daylight. Modeste now being the only daughter, her father not knowing his loss, his terrible, double misfortune made Dumay more watchful than in the past, but not less devoted. Madame Dumay idolized Modeste. Being a woman deprived of children, she heaped upon her her mother-love, without, however, forgetting the orders of her husband, who distrusted women's friendships. These orders were positive.

"If any man of whatever age or whatever rank, speaks to Modeste, looks at her or makes eyes at her, he is a dead man," said Dumay. "I will blow his brains out and give myself over to the legal consequences: perhaps my death may save her. If you do not wish to see my head cut off take my place in watching over her while I am away in the city."

For three years past, Dumay examined his weapons every evening. He put half the responsibility of his oath upon two Pyrenean dogs, two animals of unusual intelligence. One slept within the house and the other was posted in a kennel without, from which he neither came out nor barked; but the hour when these two dogs tried their teeth upon anyone would have been a terrible one for the unfortunate person.

The life led by the mother and daughter at the Chalet can now be imagined. Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, often accompanied by Gobenheim, came almost every evening to join their friends and play whist. The conversation turned

upon the gossip of Havre, the petty events of provincial life. They left between nine and ten o'clock and Modeste put her mother to bed, when they said their prayers together, encouraged each other, and spoke of the beloved traveler. After having kissed her mother good-night, she went to her own room about ten o'clock. The next day Modeste dressed her mother with the same care, the same prayers, and the same prattle. Let it be said to the praise of Modeste that since the day when a terrible calamity deprived her mother of sight she had become her servant and had always displayed the same solicitude toward her without wearying, without any indication of finding it monotonous. This sublime affection given at all times, and with a gentleness rare among young girls, was greatly appreciated by those who witnessed it. Modeste was a pearl of great price in the estimation of the Latournelles and Monsieur and Madame Dumay. Between lunch and dinner, Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay took a little walk, when the sun shone, to the water's edge, and Modeste accompanied them, as two arms were needed to guide the unfortunate blind woman.

A month previous to the scene to which this explanation is a parenthesis, Madame Mignon had taken counsel with her only friends, Madame Latournelle, the notary and Dumay, while Madame Dumay took Modeste off for a long walk.

"Listen to me, my friends," said the blind woman, "my daughter is in love, I feel it; I see it,

—a strange change has taken place in her and I do not understand how it is that you have not perceived it—"

"My word of honor—" cried the lieutenant.

"Do not interrupt me, Dumay. For two months past Modeste has taken great care of her appearance, as if she were going to meet a lover. She is exceedingly difficult to please about her shoes, she wishes to display her foot at its best. She scolds Madame Gobet her shoemaker. It is the same with her dressmaker. Some days my poor darling is meditative, expectant, as if she awaited some one; her voice has a querulous tone when one questions her, as if she were disturbed in her fancies and secret expectations; then if the expected arrives—"

"Good gracious!"

"Sit down, Dumay," said the blind woman. "Well, Modeste is gay! Oh! not for you, perhaps, these shades of expression are too delicate to be recognized by people who can see the actual. This gaiety betrays itself in the notes of her voice, certain accents which I understand. Then, instead of sitting still, dreaming, Modeste expresses a wild activity in impulsive movements,—in short, she is happy! There is grace even in the ideas which she expresses. Ah! my friends, I know happiness as well as sorrow—even by the kiss which she gives me, I understand what is passing in her mind; if she has received what she awaited or if disappointed. There are a great many shades of expression in a kiss, even in the kiss of an

innocent young girl—and Modeste is innocence itself, but it is informed innocence. If I am blind, my love is farseeing and I charge you to watch over my daughter."

Dumay became ferocious, the notary, a man who wished to ferret out a mystery, Madame Latournelle the deceived chaperone, and Madame Dumay who shared her husband's fears, constituted themselves so many spies to guard Modeste. She was not left alone for an instant. Dumay passed nights under her window wrapped in his cloak like a jealous Spaniard; but, armed with all his military sagacity he was unable to find any clew to the mystery. Unless she was in love with the nightingales in the Vilquin park or some Prince Lutin, Modeste could have seen no one nor given nor received any signal. Madame Dumay, who never went to bed until she saw that Modeste was asleep, watched the roads from the top of the Chalet with a vigilance equal to that of her husband. Under the surveillance of these Argus eyes, the irreproachable child, whose least movement was studied and analyzed, was so thoroughly acquitted of all guilt that the friends taxed Madame Mignon with foolishness and preoccupation.

Madame Latournelle, who took Modeste to and from the church, was instructed to disabuse the mother's mind about her daughter.

"Modeste," she observed, "is a young person of very exalted ideas, she adores the poetry of one author, and the prose of another. You have

only to judge by the impression produced on her by that symphony of the scaffold—an idea supplied by Butscha, who often lent his abundant wit to his benefactress—called *The Last Day of a Condemned Man*, but she seems crazy with admiration for this Monsieur Hugo. I don't know where such people—Victor Hugo, Lamartine, and Byron are *such people* in the eyes of the Madame Latournelles—get their ideas any way. The child kept talking to me about *Childe Harold*, and I, not wishing to have her get the best of me, was simple enough to commence reading the stuff, so as to reason with her about it. It may have been the fault of the translation, but it turned my stomach, made my eyes swim and I could not finish it. Why there are howling comparisons, vanishing rocks and lava of the war! Well, one may expect peculiarities in a traveling Englishman, but he passes all bounds. He takes you to Spain, puts you in the clouds above the Alps and makes the torrents and stars converse—and then there are too many virgins!—that is provoking.—Then, after Napoléon's campaigns, we have flaming bullets and sounding brass which roll through several pages. Modeste tells me that all that bathos is the fault of the translator and that I ought to read it in English. But I am not going to learn English for Lord Byron when I did not learn it for Exupère. I much prefer the novels of Ducray-Duminil to those English romances! I am too good a Norman to fall in love with things which come from foreign lands, especially England.—"

In spite of her eternal mourning, Madame Mignon could not help laughing at the idea of Madame Latournelle reading *Childe Harold,* and the wife of the notary took the smile as an approbation of her sentiments.

"Thus then, my dear Madame Mignon, you take the fancies of Modeste, the effect of her reading, for love affairs. Remember she is only twenty and at that age a girl is in love with herself and dresses for her own benefit. I remember that I used to put a man's hat on my poor little sister and play that she was a gentleman.—You had a very happy youth at Frankfort, but let us be just: Modeste has no amusements here. In spite of having her slightest wish gratified, she knows that she is watched, and the life she leads would offer very little pleasure to a young girl who did not get her amusement from books. Rest assured she loves no one as she loves you—and you may be very happy that she raves over the corsairs of Lord Byron, the heroes of Sir Walter Scott and your own Germans, the tales of Egmont, Werther, Schiller and the other *errs.*"

"Well, madame?"—said Dumay respectfully, somewhat frightened at Madame Mignon's silence.

"Modeste is not only in love, but she loves some individual man," responded the mother obstinately.

"Madame, this thing affects my life, my honor, and you must allow me, not only for my own sake, but on account of my wife, my colonel and all of us, to ferret this to the bottom and find out whether it is the mother or the watch-dog that is deceived."

"It is you, Dumay! Ah! if I could only see my daughter!—" said the unfortunate blind woman.

"But with whom can she be in love?" asked Madame Latournelle. "As for us, I can be responsible for my Exupère."

"It cannot be Gobenheim, whom we have seen scarcely nine hours a week since the colonel went away," said Dumay. "Besides he does not think of Modeste, that crown of one hundred sous made into a man! His uncle Gobenheim-Keller told him to be sure and get rich enough to marry a Keller. With this program there is no fear that he will even know to what sex Modeste belongs. Those are all the men we see here. I do not count Butscha, though I love him, poor little hunchback. He is your Dumay, madame," he said to the lawyer's wife. "Butscha knows very well that one look cast upon Modeste would cost him a soaking such as they give in Vannes.—Not a soul has had any communication with us. Madame Latournelle, who since your—your affliction, madame, comes to take Modeste with her to church and returns with her, has observed her carefully these last days during the service and has seen nothing suspicious about her. And if I must confess, I myself have raked the avenues about the house for a month, and have never found them with any traces of footsteps."—

"Rakes are neither expensive nor difficult to handle," said the daughter of Germany.

"And the dogs?" asked Dumay.

"Lovers know how to find potions for them," said Madame Mignon.

"I shall blow my brains out if you are right, for I shall be done for," cried Dumay.

"And why, Dumay?"

"Ah! madame I could not bear to look the colonel in the face if he should not find his daughter, now his only daughter, as pure, as virtuous as she was when he said to me on the ship, 'Let not the fear of the scaffold stay you Dumay, if it be a question of Modeste's honor.'"

"I recognize you both in that speech," said Madame Mignon, much moved.

"I would wager my everlasting salvation, that Modeste is as pure as she was in her little cradle," said Madame Dumay.

"Oh! I should be sure of it," Dumay replied, "if the countess would allow me to try one means, for we old troopers believe in stratagems."

"I will permit you to do anything possible to enlighten us unless it will injure our child."

"What will you do, Anne, to learn the secret of a young girl when it is so well guarded?" asked Madame Dumay.

"You must all obey me," exclaimed the lieutenant, "I shall need every one."

This rapid summary, which, if understandingly developed, would have furnished an entire picture gallery of manners and customs in which many families could recognize the events of their lives, will suffice to make comprehensible the slight

details of the individuals and things given during this evening when the old soldier had undertaken to struggle with a young girl's heart and force from its depths a love observed only by her blind mother.

*

An hour passed in terrible silence, interrupted only by the hieroglyphic words of the whist players: "Spades! Trump! Cut! Have we the honors? Two of clubs! Eight tricks! Whose deal?"—phrases which constitute to-day the great emotions of the European aristocracy. Modeste, who was embroidering, was not surprised at her mother's silence. Madame Mignon's handkerchief slipped from her dress to the floor, and as Butscha hastened to pick it up, finding himself near Modeste, as he rose he whispered in her ear:

"Be on your guard."

Modeste looked at the dwarf with astonished eyes whose subdued rays filled him with ineffable joy.

"She does not love any one," the poor hunchback said to himself, rubbing his hands hard enough to tear off the skin.

At this moment Exupère rushed through the garden, into the house and finally burst into the drawing-room like a whirlwind, and said in Dumay's ear:

"The young man is here."

Dumay rose, snatched his pistols and went out.

"Mercy! suppose he kill him," exclaimed Madame Dumay, as she burst into tears.

"What has happened?" asked Modeste, looking fearlessly and innocently at her friends.

"Oh! there is a young man walking around the Chalet—" cried Madame Latournelle.

"Well, but why should Dumay kill him?" replied Modeste.

"*Sancta simplicitas!*" exclaimed Butscha, looking at his master as proudly as Alexander looks at Babylon in the great picture by Lebrun.

"Where are you going, Modeste?" the mother asked of her daughter as she got up to leave the room.

"To prepare everything for you to go to bed, mama," replied Modeste in a voice as pure as the tones of a harmonica.

"You have had your trouble for nothing," said the dwarf to Dumay when he returned.

"Modeste is as virtuous as the Virgin on our altar," exclaimed Madame Latournelle.

"Bless me! such emotions exhaust me although I am very strong," said the cashier.

"I am willing to lose twenty five sous, if I understand one word of what you are about this evening," said Gobenheim. "You seem to me to be crazy."

"Nevertheless, it concerns a treasure," said Butscha standing on tiptoe to reach Gobenheim's ear.

"Unfortunately, Dumay, I am almost confident of what I have told you," repeated the mother.

"It is now your turn, madame, to prove to us that we are wrong," said Dumay in a calm voice.

Seeing that it was only a question of Modeste's honor, Gobenheim took his hat, bowed, and went away taking with him ten sous, as he deemed another rubber impossible.

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M. DUMAY'S RUSE

"Dumay rose, snatched his pistols and rushed out.

"Mercy! surely he kill him," exclaimed Madame Dumay, as she burst into tears.

"What has happened?" asked Modeste, looking fearlessly and inquiringly at her friends.

"[illegible] young man walking around the Champs [illegible]," said Madame Lecourvelle.

"But what why should Dumay kill him?" replied Modeste.

"Sancta simplicia!" exclaimed Butscha.

"Oh! there is a young man walking around the Chalet—" cried Madame Latournelle.

"Well, but why should Dumay kill him?" replied Modeste.

"*Sancta simplicitas!*" exclaimed Butscha, looking at his master as proudly as Alexander looks at Babylon in the great picture by Lebrun.

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"Sancta simplicitas!" *exclaimed Butscha*

M. DUMAY'S RUSE

Dumay rose, snatched his pistols and went out.

"Mercy! suppose he kill him," exclaimed Madame Dumay, as she burst into tears.

"What has happened?" asked Modeste, looking fearlessly and innocently at her friends.

"Oh! there is a young man scuffling around the Chalet—" cried Madame Latournelle.

"Well, but only should Dumay kill him?" replied Modeste.

"Sancta simplicitas!" exclaimed Bursella.



"Exupère, and you Butscha, leave us," said Madame Latournelle. "Go into Havre, you can be there in time to go to the theatre, and I will pay for the tickets."

When Madame Mignon was alone with her four friends, Madame Latournelle, after having looked at Dumay, who being a Breton, understood the stubbornness of the mother, and at her husband who was playing with the cards, thought herself authorized to speak first.

"Come now, Madame Mignon, what decisive thing has impressed your mind?"

"Ah! my good friend, if you were a musician you would already have heard, as I have, the language of Modeste when she speaks of love."

The piano, belonging to the two young girls, was among the few pieces of furniture which had been brought from the town house to the Chalet, for the use of the ladies. Modeste had sometimes driven away her troubles by studying without a master, and, a born musician, she played to cheer her mother. She sang naturally and loved the German airs her mother had taught her. From these lessons and efforts resulted a phenomenon common enough in natures having the true musical instinct; that is, without knowing it, Modeste composed really melodious songs, as one can compose without understanding harmony. Melody is to music what imagery and sentiment are to poetry, flowers that can bloom spontaneously. Thus national melodies preceded the invention of harmony, as botany came

after the flowers. So Modeste without having learned the painter's profession, except what she had seen with her sister, who painted in water colors, would have stood charmed and spellbound before a picture by Raphael, Titian, Rubens, Murillo, Rembrandt, Albert Dürer or Holbein—that is before the beau ideals of each country. Modeste, especially for the last month, had spent her time singing like a nightingale. The meaning and poetry of these attempts had aroused the attention of her mother, who was greatly surprised to note her enthusiasm in composing and arranging airs to unknown words.

"If your suspicions have no basis," said Madame Latournelle to Madame Mignon, "I pity your susceptibility."

"When the young girls of Brittany sing," said Dumay gloomily, "the lover is not far off."

"I will let you hear Modeste as she improvises and you will see," replied the mother.

"Poor child," said Madame Dumay, "if she but knew our anxieties, she would be in despair, and would tell us the truth, especially if she knew how it concerned Dumay."

"My friends, I will question my daughter to-morrow," said Madame Mignon, "and perhaps I shall obtain more through tenderness, than you through strategy."

Was the comedy of the *Ill-Guarded Daughter* being enacted there, as everywhere and always, without these good Bartolos, these devoted spies, these ever

vigilant Pyrenese dogs being able to scent, divine or see the lover, the intrigue or the smoke of the fire? This was not the result of any defiance between the guardians and the prisoner, between the despotism of the dungeon and the liberty of the prisoner, but the eternal repetition of the first scene played at the raising of Creation's curtain—Eve in Paradise. Now which was right, the mother or the watch-dogs? None of the persons who were around Modeste could understand this young girl's heart, for, believe me, her soul and face were in harmony. Modeste had transported her existence into a world as contradictory to our day as was that of Christopher Columbus to the sixteenth century. Happily she kept her feelings to herself, otherwise she would have appeared mad. Let us explain before all else the influence of the past upon Modeste.

Two events formed for all time the soul, as they had developed the mind, of this young girl. Warned by the misfortune which had befallen Bettina, Monsieur and Madame Mignon had resolved, before the failure arrived, to marry Modeste. They had chosen the son of a rich banker, a native of Hamburg, who had been living since 1815 at Havre, and was under obligations to them. This young man, named Francisque Althor, the dandy of Havre, endowed with that ordinary beauty which satisfies the commoner class,—he was what the English call a "masher," of high flesh tint, stout and of powerful build,—abandoned his fiancée so completely when he heard of the failure, that he had never since seen

Modeste, Madame Mignon or the Dumays. Latournelle having chanced to question papa Jacob Althor on the subject, the German shrugged his shoulders and replied, "I do not know what you are talking about!" This reply, carried to Modeste in order to give her experience, was all the better understood as a lesson, because Latournelle and Dumay made extended commentaries upon this ignominious treachery. Charles Mignon's two daughters, spoiled children, rode horseback, kept their own horses and grooms and otherwise enjoyed a dangerous liberty. Modeste when she saw herself with an authorized lover, had allowed Francisque to kiss her hand, to take her by the waist when he helped her to mount, and accepted his bouquets, those delicate tokens of tenderness shown to one's betrothed which accompany all love-making. She had embroidered a purse for him, believing in such bonds, so strong for beautiful souls, but which are as spider's threads for the Gobenheims, the Vilquins and the Althors.

During the Spring following the establishment of Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon at the Chalet, Francisque Althor came to dine with the Vilquins, when catching a glimpse of Modeste over the wall bounding the lawn, he turned his head away. Six weeks later he married the elder Mademoiselle Vilquin. Modeste, young, beautiful and of noble birth, thus learned that for three months she had been only Mademoiselle *Million*. The recognized poverty of Modeste was thus a sentinel which defended the approaches to the Chalet as effectively

as the prudence of the Dumays or the vigilance of the Latournelle household. Mademoiselle Mignon was only mentioned to be insulted by such phrases as: "Poor girl, what will become of her? She will remain an old maid. What a fate! to have seen everyone at her feet, to have had the chance of marrying Althor's son, and now to find herself with no one who wishes her. To have known the most luxurious life, my dear, and then to fall into poverty." Let no one imagine that these speeches were made in secret and only guessed at by Modeste. She heard them repeated often by the young men and girls of Havre, who in walking to Ingouville, and knowing that Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon were living at the Chalet, spoke of them as they passed that pretty house. Some of Vilquin's friends were astonished that these two women had been willing to live in the midst of the creations of their former splendor. Modeste, behind her closed blinds, often heard insolent speeches of this kind: "I do not understand how they can live there!" Someone had said while strolling around the grounds, perhaps to help the Vilquins to drive away their tenants: "What do they live on? what can they do there?—The old lady has become blind! Is Mademoiselle Mignon still pretty? Ah! she has her horses no longer! Dear me, how she put on airs!—" Upon hearing this wild nonsense, the outcome of envy, which burst forth in a snarling, spiteful tone, even in regard to the past, many young girls would have felt the blood mount to their

foreheads, others would have wept, some would have been enraged, but Modeste smiled, as one smiles at the theatre when listening to the actors. Her pride did not descend to the level of such base speeches.

The other event was much more serious than this mercenary cowardice. Bettina-Caroline died in Modeste's arms, and was nursed by her sister with the devotion of youth, and the curiosity of a virgin imagination. During the silence of night, the two sisters exchanged many confidences. With what dramatic interest was Bettina clothed in the eyes of her innocent sister! Bettina understood passion only through misfortune, she died a victim of love. Between two young girls, every man, no matter how much of a rascal he may be, remains a lover. Passion is the one absolute thing in life, and it can never be wrong. Georges d'Estourney, gambler, criminal, and debauchee, always assumed in the minds of these two young girls the form of the Parisian dandy admired of women at the fêtes of Havre.—Bettina thought she had taken him away from the coquettish Madame Vilquin to become her happy lover.—Adoration in a young girl is stronger than all social condemnation. In Bettina's eyes justice had been deceived, or how could it have condemned a young man, by whom she had been loved for six months—passionately loved—in that mysterious retreat where Georges had hidden her in Paris, in order to preserve his liberty? The dying Bettina had thus implanted in her sister the

sentiment of love. These two young girls had often talked of this grand drama of passion, which the imagination magnifies still more; and the dead woman had carried to her tomb the uninformed innocence of her sister, leaving her, if not instructed, at least devoured by curiosity.

Nevertheless, remorse had too often plunged its fangs into Bettina's heart for her to dispense with good advice to her sister. In the midst of her avowals, she had never failed to preach to Modeste, and to recommend to her an absolute obedience to her family. The night before her death, she had supplicated her sister to remember her tear-soaked pillow, and not to follow a line of conduct which so much suffering had barely expiated.

Bettina accused herself of having brought a curse upon her family, and died in despair at not having obtained her father's forgiveness. In spite of religious consolations and softened by so much repentance, Bettina could not take her final sleep without exclaiming with her latest breath in heartrending tones, "My father! oh! my father!"

"Never give your heart without your hand," Bettina said to Modeste an hour before her death, "and above all do not receive the homage of any man without the knowledge of mama and papa.—"

These words, so touching in their literal truth, spoken in the crisis of her last agony, were oftener echoed in Modeste's thoughts than if Bettina had dictated the most solemn oath to her. This poor girl, clear-sighted as a prophet, drew from under her

pillow a ring on which she had had engraved at Havre through her faithful servant Françoise Cochet, these words: "Think of Bettina! 1827," instead of any other device. A few moments before she drew her last breath, she placed this ring upon her sister's finger, praying her to keep it there until her marriage.

There was thus between these two young girls a strange union of poignant remorse and artless visions of the short summer of love,—to which had so promptly succeeded the deadly, cold atmosphere of abandonment, but in which tears, regrets and memories were always dominated by the terror of doing wrong.

Yet this tragedy of the girl seduced and returning to die of a horrible malady under the roof of fallen splendor, the disaster of her father, the cowardice of her fiancé, the blindness produced by her mother's grief, found response only as yet in Modeste's outward life, with which alone the Dumays and Latournelles were concerned, for no devotion can take the place of a mother's eye. The monotonous life in this pretty Chalet surrounded by the flowers cultivated by Dumay; these habits with the regularity of clockwork, this provincial prudence, these card parties during which one sat and knitted, this silence interrupted only by the roaring of the sea at the time of the equinox; this monastic tranquillity concealed a most tumultuous life,—a life of imagination,—a life of the intellect. We sometimes wonder that young girls go wrong; but there does

not exist near them a blind mother, to strike her intuitive rod upon the subterranean depths of the virgin's heart, hollowed out by fancy. The Dumays were sleeping when Modeste opened her window, fondly imagining that a man might pass by, the man of her dreams, the expected knight who would take her behind him on his horse while risking Dumay's fire.

Modeste, cast down after her sister's death, plunged into reading, steeping her mind in literature. Educated to speak two languages, she understood German as well as French, while she and her sister had learned English from Madame Dumay. Modeste, being little watched over in this and by persons without instruction, gave her mind for food the modern masterpieces of the three languages, English, German and French. Lord Byron, Goethe, Schiller, Walter Scott, Hugo, Lamartine, Crabbe, Moore, the great works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, history and the drama, novels from Rabelais to Manon Lescaut, from the *Essays* of Montaigne to Diderot, from the *Fables* to the *Nouvelle Héloïse*,—the thoughts of these three nationalities filled with confused images that girlish head, sublime in its cold artlessness, its sustained virginity, but from which burst forth brilliant, full-armed, a sincere, strong and absolute admiration for genius. A new book was a great event for Modeste; she was happy with a masterpiece which would have frightened Madame Latournelle, as we have seen; she grieved when the book did not rend her heart.

An innate sentimentality worked in this soul, full of the beautiful illusions of youth. But not one ray of this burning life came to the surface. It escaped the view of both Lieutenant Dumay and his wife, as well as the Latournelles, and only the ears of the blind mother heard the crackling of the flame. The profound disdain which Modeste had conceived for ordinary men, soon impressed on her face an indescribable air of pride, of harshness even, which modified her Germanic artlessness and which corresponded also with a detail of her physiognomy. The roots of her hair, forming a point on her forehead, seemed to continue the slight line already formed by thought between her eyebrows, thus making this expression of firmness a little too strong. The voice of this charming child, whom, on account of her mind, Charles, before his departure, had called his *Little Solomon,* had acquired the most delicious flexibility from the study of three languages. This advantage was still more enhanced by the timbre of the voice, which was both smooth and fresh and impressed the heart as much as the ear. If the mother could not see the hope of a great destiny written upon this forehead, she studied the transitions of the growth of a soul in the accents of this amorous voice.

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With Modeste, after the period of this eager reading, there followed the play of that strange faculty given to imaginative minds, that of making themselves actors in a life of mere dreams; of representing to one's self the things desired with an impression so keen that it borders on reality, to enjoy by the sentiment, to surmount everything even to the years, to being married, to seeing one's self old, to assisting at one's own funeral, as did Charles V.; in short, to enact in one's self the comedy of life and, if need be, of death. Modeste was playing the comedy of love. She imagined herself adored to her heart's content, passing through all the social phases. Having become the heroine of a sad novel, she loved either a brute or some rascal who ended upon the scaffold, or, like her sister, some fashionable young man without a sou whose life was confined to the sixth story. She imagined herself a courtesan, and made fun of her admirers in the midst of continual fêtes, as did Ninon. She led in turn the life of an adventuress, or that of a much-applauded actress, exhausting the adventures of Gil Blas, and the triumphs of Pasta, Malibran and Florine. Then, weary of horrors, she returned to actual life. She had married a lawyer, she ate the brown bread of an honest everyday life and saw herself reflected in Madame Latournelle. She

accepted a painful existence, she bore the bustle of fortune-making. Then she recommenced the romances. She was loved for her beauty by a son of a peer of France, an eccentric young man, an artist, divined her heart and recognized the star which the genius of the de Staëls had placed upon her forehead. Finally, her father returned with millions. Justified by her experience, she subjected her lovers to ordeals in which she guarded her own independence. She possessed a magnificent château, with servants, equipages, everything that luxury could present which was rare, and she mystified her lovers until she was forty years old, at which age she made her decision. This edition of *The Thousand and One Nights*, of which only one copy was printed, lasted one year and gave Modeste, in thought, the experience of satiety. Too often she had held her life in the hollow of her hand, she had said to herself philosophically and with too much bitterness, with too much seriousness and too often: "Well! and afterwards?—" not to plunge herself up to her waist into that profound disgust into which the earnest men of genius fall, only to withdraw themselves through the tremendous labor of the work to which they have dedicated themselves. Had it not been for her rich nature, for her youth, Modeste would have gone into a convent. This satiety threw this girl, already filled with catholic grace, into the love of the Good, into the infinity of Heaven. She thought of charity as an occupation for life; but she crept back into a dejected

melancholy in not being able to find food for the fancies crouching in her heart like a venomous insect at the bottom of a calyx. Yet she tranquilly sewed on garments for poor women's children, and listened with an absent manner to the grumblings of Monsieur Latournelle to Monsieur Dumay, for having cut a thirteenth card, or for having drawn his last trump. Her faith drove Modeste into a strange pathway. She imagined by becoming irreproachable—speaking from a catholic point of view—she would arrive at such a condition of sanctity, that God would listen to her and grant her desires.

Faith according to Jesus Christ can move mountains, the Savior led His apostle on the Lake of Tiberius; but I, I ask only a husband of God, she said to herself; that is surely easier than to walk upon the waters.

She fasted an entire Lent and did not commit the least sin; then she told herself that some day in leaving the church she would meet a fine young man, worthy of her and of whom her mother would approve and who, madly in love, would follow her.

The day which she had assigned to God for the purpose of sending an angel to her, she was obstinately followed by a poor wretch, disgusting enough in appearance. It rained in torrents and there was not a single young man in sight. She went to walk upon the quay to watch the Englishmen disembark, but each of them had an Englishwoman with him, almost as pretty as Modeste, and there was not the least trace of a wandering Childe Harold. This

time tears overcame her when, like Marius, she seated herself on the ruins of her fancies. One day, when she had summoned God's aid for the third time, she believed that the chosen one of her dreams had entered the church and, perhaps, hidden himself through delicacy behind one of the pillars, so she took Madame Latournelle on a tour of inspection. This blow deprived her of all belief in the power of God to help her. She often held conversations with this imaginary lover, inventing questions and replies, and ascribing much intelligence to him.

The excessive ambition of her heart hidden in these romances, was the cause of that prudence of conduct so much admired by the good people who guarded Modeste; they might have brought many Francisque Althors and Vilquin sons to her, and she would not have stooped to such clowns. She desired purely and simply a man of genius, talent seemed to her a small thing, even as a lawyer is nothing to a girl who limits herself to an ambassador. She desired riches only to throw them at the feet of her idol. The gold background, upon which the figures of her dreams were outlined, was even less rich than her heart, full of womanly delicacy, for her one thought was to render happy and rich a Tasso, a Milton, a Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Murat, a Christopher Columbus. Ordinary misfortunes made little impression upon this youthful soul who wished to extinguish the funeral piles of those martyrs often ignored during their lifetime.

Modeste thirsted for the unnamed sorrows, the grand suffering of thought. Sometimes she composed balms, she invented refinements, music and the thousand means by which she could have calmed the savage misanthropy of Jean-Jacques. Sometimes she imagined herself the wife of Lord Byron and almost comprehended his disdain of the real, in making herself as fantastic as the poetry of Manfred and understood his doubts in making him a Catholic. Modeste reproached all the women of the seventeenth century for the melancholy of Molière.

"Why," she asked herself, "was there not one woman, loving, rich and beautiful, to stand by every man of genius and become his slave like Lara, the mysterious page?"

She had, you will see, well understood the sorrow which the English poet sang through the character of Gulnare. She greatly admired the act of that young English girl who offered herself to the son of Crébillon and whom he married. The story of Sterne and Eliza Draper made her life and happiness for several months. Having become, in imagination, the heroine of a like romance, she more than once studied the sublime role of Eliza. The admirable tenderness so graciously expressed in this correspondence, dimmed her eyes with tears, which it is said were wanting in those of the cleverest English authors.

Modeste also lived for a time through the comprehension, not only of the works, but also of the

characters of her favorite authors. Goldsmith, the author of Obermann, Charles Nodier, Maturin, the poorest and most suffering among them, were her deities. She divined their sorrows, she initiated herself into their destitution so intermingled with celestial ideas and she poured out the treasures of her heart for them; she saw herself the author of the material well-being of these artists, martyrs to their faculties. This noble tender-heartedness, this intuition of the difficulties of work, this worship of talent, is one of the rarest fancies which has ever glowed in the womanly heart. At first it is like a secret between the woman and her God; for there is in it nothing striking, nothing which flatters the vanity—that powerful auxiliary to noble actions in France. During this third period of the development of her ideas, there was born in Modeste a passionate desire to penetrate into the heart of one of these anomalous existences, to understand the forces of thought, the innermost woes of genius; to know not only what he wishes to be, but what he is. Thus with her, these vagaries of Fancy, the voyages of her soul into space, the glances darted into the mysteries of the future, the impatience of an unformed love to reach its goal, the nobility of her ideas as to life, her resolution to suffer in an elevated sphere instead of paddling around in the swamps of a provincial life, as her mother had done, the pledge which she maintained with herself not to do wrong, but to respect the paternal hearth-stone and bring only joy to her home—all this world of

sentiments finally found expression and definite shape.

Modeste wished to become the companion of a poet, an artist, in short, a man superior to the mass of men; but she wished to choose him herself, to give him her heart, her life, her great tenderness free from the storminess of passion, only, however, after having subjected him to profound study. She commenced by thinking over and enjoying this little romance. The most perfect tranquillity reigned in her soul. Her cheeks took on a delicate color. She became the beautiful and sublime image of Germany which you have seen, the glory of the Chalet and the pride of Madame Latournelle and the Dumays.

Modeste led then a double existence. Humbly and lovingly she performed all the details of the everyday life at the Chalet, she made use of it as a curb to keep in subjection her ideal life, in imitation of the Carthusian monks, who occupy themselves and regulate their material life in order to permit the soul to develop itself in prayer. All great minds bind themselves down to some mechanical work in order to make themselves masters of their thoughts. Spinosa ground glass for spectacles, Bayle counted roof-tiles, Montesquieu worked in the garden. The body thus controlled, the soul may spread its wings with security. Madame Mignon, who read her daughter's heart, was then right. Modeste loved, she loved with that platonic love so rare, so little understood, the first illusion of a

young girl, the most delicate of all sentiments—a very dainty of the heart. She quaffed long draughts from the cup of the unknown, the impossible, the visionary. She admired the blue bird of Paradise of youth which sings afar off, and upon which the hand can never rest, which allows itself only to be caught sight of, and which no shot can reach, whose magical colors, like scintillating gems, dazzle the eyes, and which is never seen again when Reality, that hideous hag, appears, accompanied by witnesses and the mayor. To have all the poetry of love without seeing the lover! What a gentle debauch! What a chimera with flowing mane and outspread wings!

And here is the trivial and foolish chance which decided the life of this young girl.

Modeste saw on the shelf of a bookseller the lithograph portrait of Canalis, one of her favorites. You know how false these sketches are, which are the outcome of hideous speculations which take as their object the persons of celebrated people, as if their faces were public property. Now Canalis was presented in a very Byronic pose, for the admiration of the public; his hair in a gale of wind, his throat bare, his forehead out of proportion, as every bard's should be. The forehead of Victor Hugo has caused the hair to be cut from as many foreheads, as the glory of Napoléon has caused marshals, in embryo, to be killed.

This face, made sublime by commercial necessity, struck Modeste. The day upon which she bought

this portrait, one of the most beautiful works of d'Arthez appeared, and even if Modeste suffers in your opinion, it must be acknowledged that she hesitated a long time between the illustrious poet and the famous prose-writer. But were these two celebrated men free?

Modeste commenced by assuring herself of the co-operation of Françoise Cochet, the girl who was taken away and brought back to Havre by poor Bettina-Caroline, whom Mesdames Mignon and Dumay, preferring to all others, hired by the day and who lived at Havre. She took this sufficiently discredited girl to her room, assured her that she would never bring the least sorrow to her parents, and never overstep the limits imposed upon a young girl. She also assured Françoise that later, upon the return of her father, she should have a restful life for the rest of her days provided she kept the secret inviolate, of the service she demanded. What was this? A small and innocent thing surely. All that Modeste asked of her accomplice was to mail some letters and to take from the office those addressed to Françoise Cochet. The compact made, Modeste wrote a polite little note to Dauriat, the publisher of the poems of Canalis, in which she asked him, in the interest of the great poet, if Canalis were married; then she begged him to address his reply to Mademoiselle Françoise, poste restante, Havre.

Dauriat, incapable of considering this letter seriously, replied by a letter written while five or six

journalists were in his office, all of whom added their witticisms.

MADEMOISELLE:

Canalis (Baron de) Constant-Cyr-Melchior, member of the French Academy, born in 1800, at Canalis (Corrèze), height, five feet four inches, in good condition, vaccinated, of pure blood, has satisfactorily arranged his conscription, enjoys perfect health, owns a little patrimonial estate in Corrèze and wishes to marry, but the lady must be very rich.

He bears per pale, gules an axe or, sable three escallops argent, above which is a baron's coronet; supporters, two larches, vert. Device: OR ET FER (—never *aurifere*—auriferous).

The original Canalis, who went to the Holy Land with the First Crusade, according to the chronicles of Auvergne, is related to have been armed only with an axe on account of the extreme indigence of the family at that time, which still weighs upon the race. Thence comes, doubtless, the escutcheon. The axe has given place to the shell. This lofty baron is still celebrated to-day for having routed a great number of infidels, and died at Jerusalem without *or* or *fer*, naked as a worm, on the way to Ascalon, ambulances being then unknown.

The château of Canalis—there are some chestnuts grown there—consists of two dilapidated towers joined by a crumbling wall remarkable for the fine ivy which grows on it, and is taxed at twenty-two francs.

The undersigned editor begs to observe that he buys volumes of Monsieur de Canalis's poems at ten thousand francs each volume, as the author does not give away his shells. The poet of Corrèze lives in Rue de Paradis-Poissonnière, number 29, which is a very convenient quarter for a poet of the angelic school. The *vers* attract the gudgeons. Letters must be *post-paid*.

Some noble ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain are said to take their way to Paradise and protect this god. King

Charles X. thinks so highly of this great poet as to believe him capable of becoming administrator; he has recently nominated him as an officer of the Legion of Honor, and, what is worth more, master of the Court of Claims at the ministry of Foreign Affairs. These functions do not prevent the great man from drawing a pension of three thousand francs from the funds intended for the encouragement of art and literature. This money success causes an eighth plague in the library which Egypt escaped—*les vers*.

The last edition of the works of Canalis, printed on vellum, with illustrations by Bixiou, Joseph Bridau, Schinner, Sommervieux, etc., published by Didot, is in five volumes, price nine francs by mail

This letter fell like a paving-stone on a tulip. A poet, master of the Court of Claims drawing a salary at the ministry, and receiving a pension, seeking a red decoration, flattered by the women of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—did he resemble the wretched poet strolling along the quays, sad, dreamy, tired out by work and mounting to his attic freighted with poetry?—However, Modeste divined the sarcasm of the envious bookseller who said: "I made Canalis! I made Nathan!" Besides, she had re-read the poems of Canalis, which were extremely seductive, full of hypocrisy, and need a word of analysis to explain to you her enchantment.

Canalis differs from Lamartine, the chief of the angelic school, by his wheedling tone as of a sick-nurse, by a treacherous sweetness, and a delightful correctness. If the chief with his sublime cries is an eagle, Canalis, white and rose, is a flamingo. In him, women find the friend they need, a discreet

confidant, their interpreter, a being who understands them, and who explains them to themselves. The large margins left on the last edition by Dauriat were covered over with notes written by Modeste's pencil expressive of her sympathy with this dreamful and tender soul. Canalis does not possess the gift of life, he cannot breathe existence into his creations; but he knows how to calm the vague sufferings such as assailed Modeste. He speaks in their own language to young girls, he soothes the suffering of the most bleeding wounds, he stills their moans, even their sobs. His talent does not consist so much in making stirring speeches to those who suffer, in giving them a remedy in arousing strong emotions; he is content to say to them in a harmonious voice which they trust: "I too am unhappy, I understand you well, come to me and let us weep together on the border of this brook under the willows." And they follow him, they listen to his empty and sonorous poetry as children listen to a nurse's song. Canalis is like Nodier in this, he enchants you by a naïveté, natural to the prose writer, but sought after by Canalis, by his finesse, his smile, his leaf-shed flowers, his infantine philosophy. He imitates so well the language of our youth, that he leads us back into the fields of illusion. We are pitiless with the eagles, we demand from them the qualities of the diamond, incorruptible perfection; but with Canalis one is content with him as he is, without wishing for more. He seems a good fellow and above all, human. The

affectations of the angelic poet succeed with him, just as those of a woman who plays well the part of an *ingénue*, the surprised, the youth, the victim, the wounded angel, will always succeed. While receiving these impressions Modeste had confidence in that soul, and in that countenance as ravishing as that of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. She paid no heed to the publisher, and about the beginning of the month of August she wrote the following letter to this Dorat of the Sacristy, who still holds his own as one of the stars of the modern Pleiades:

I

TO MONSIEUR DE CANALIS

"Many times, monsieur, I have wished to write to you and why? you can guess it:—to tell you how I admire your great talent. Yes, I indeed need to express to you the admiration of a poor country girl, alone in her corner, and whose greatest happiness is to read your poetry. I come from René to you. Melancholy follows revery. How many women have sent you the homage of their secret thoughts —what chance have I to be noticed in this crowd? How can this paper—filled as it is with my soul—be more to you than all the perfumed sheets which beset you? I present myself with more anxiety than any other; and I wish to remain unknown to you, and I crave an entire confidence, as if you had known me for a long time.

"Be good to me and answer my letter. I do not promise to make myself known to you some day, however I do not say absolutely that I will not. What can I add to this letter?—Then monsieur, see in it a great effort, and permit me to offer you my hand, oh! such a friendly hand—that of

"Your servant,

"O. D'ESTE-M."

"If you do me the kindness to reply to this, address your letter, please, to Mademoiselle F. Cochet, *poste restante,* Havre."

MODESTE MIGNON TO CANALIS

*"Many times, monsieur, I have wished to write to you and why? you can guess it:—to tell you how I admire your great talent. Yes, I indeed need to express to you the admiration of a poor country girl, alone in her corner, and whose greatest happiness is to read your poetry. * * * How many women have sent you the homage of their secret thoughts * * * How can this paper—filled as it is with my soul—"*

"Be good to me and answer my letter. I do not promise to make myself known to you some day, however I do not say absolutely that I will not. What can I add to this letter?—I beg monsieur, see in it a great effort, and permit me to offer you my hand, oh! such a friendly hand—that of

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MODESTE MIGNON TO CANALIS

*"Many times, monsieur, I have wished to write to you and why? you can guess it:—to tell you how I admire your great talent. Yes, I indeed need to express to you the admiration of a poor country girl, alone in her corner, and whose great happiness is to read your poetry. * * * How many times have sent you the homage of their [illegible] * * * How can this paper—filled with [illegible] soul—"*

MODESTE MIGNON TO CALYALIS

"Many times, monsieur, I have wished to write to you and tell you can guess it:—to tell you how I admire your great talent. Yes, I indeed need to express to you the admiration of a poor country girl, alone in her corner, and whose greatest happiness is to read your Poetry. * * * How many reasons have sent you the homage of their secret thoughts * * * How can this paper—filled as it is with my soul—"

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*

Now all young girls, romantic or otherwise, can imagine in what impatience Modeste spent the next few days! The air was full of tongues of fire. The trees seemed bedecked with plumage. She did not realize that she had a body, but floated in space, the earth seemed to bend beneath her feet. Delighted with the institution of the post-office, she followed her little sheet of paper on its journey and was happy as one is happy at twenty in the first exercise of one's will. She was occupied, possessed as one in the Middle Ages. She imagined his apartment the poet's desk, she saw him break the seal of her letter and she made endless suppositions about it.

After having sketched his poetry, it becomes necessary to give the profile of the poet. Canalis is a dried-up little man of aristocratic appearance, dark complexion, with a calf-like face and a slender head like that of a man who has more vanity than pride. He loves luxury, style and splendor, and money is more necessary to him than to most men. Proud of his noble birth, as much as of his talent, he has injured the importance of his ancestry by making too much of them, for after all the Canalises are not the Nègrepelisses, nor the Cadignans, nor the Grandlieus, nor the Navarreins; however, nature has served his claims well. He has those eyes of

Oriental brightness which we demand in a poet, a charm of manner, and a vibrating voice; but a natural charlatanism destroys nearly all these advantages. He is really a comedian. If he advances a well-shaped foot, it is because it has become a habit. If he uses declamatory phrases, it is because they are his own. If he takes a dramatic pose, it is because he has made his deportment second nature. Faults of this kind harmonize with an ever-present generosity, which he displays, which we must call knight-errantry in contrast to chivalry. Canalis has not enough faith for a Don Quixote, but he is too lofty not to put himself on the nobler side of a question. His poetry, which makes these feverish outbreaks at every turn, really injures the poet who does not lack mind, but his talent prevents him from using it properly; he is dominated by his reputation and tries to make it appear greater than it is. Thus, as very often happens, the man is not in complete accord with the products of his brain. These wheedling, naïve, tender pieces, these calm verses, pure as a frozen lake, this caressing feminine poesy has for author, an ambitious little man in a tightly-buttoned frock-coat, a diplomatic bearing, dreaming of political influence, fulsomely aristocratic, perfumed and pretentious, thirsting for the money necessary to his ambition, already spoiled by his success in two directions: crowned by the laurel and the myrtle. With an office worth eight thousand francs, a pension of three thousand francs, two thousand francs from the Academy, three

thousand from his inherited estate—less the necessary repairs of the Canalis land—a total of fifteen thousand francs fixed, plus the ten thousand francs on an average which accrued from his poetry—in all twenty-five thousand francs. For the hero of Modeste, however, this sum constituted so precarious a fortune that he usually spent five or six thousand francs over his incom ; but the king's private purse and the secret funds of the ministry had heretofore made up this deficit. He had written a hymn for the king's coronation which had been worth a whole silver service to him. He had refused to accept money, saying that a Canalis owed homage to the King of France. The chevalier-king smiled and ordered from Odiot a costly edition of the verses of Zaïre.

> Ah! rhymester, you would flatter yourself,
> By effacing Charles the Tenth in generosity.

About this time Canalis had, according to the journalists' picturesque way of putting it, emptied his budget; he did not feel capable of inventing a new form in poetry; his lyre did not possess seven strings; it had only one; and having been forced to harp on it for so long, the public left him no alternative but to hang himself with it or be mute. De Marsay, who did not like Canalis, made a jesting remark whose poisonous point had wounded his self-esteem.

"Canalis," he said, "puts me in mind of a brave man who was sought out by Frederick the Great

after a battle and commended because he had never ceased tooting his one little tune."

Canalis wished to become a politician and to further this end, he made use of a journey he had once made to Madrid as the ambassador of the Duc de Chaulieu; but according to the gossip of the salons, he really went as an attaché of the Duchesse de Chaulieu. How often a word of gossip has decided the whole course of a man's life! The former president of the Cisalpine Republic, Colla, the greatest lawyer of the Piedmontese, was told by a friend at the age of forty that he knew nothing of botany. He was piqued, he became a second Jussieu, cultivated flowers, introduced new ones, and published in Latin, *The Flora of Piedmont*, a work of ten years.

"After all, Canning and Chateaubriand are both politicians," the crushed poet said to himself, "and De Marsay will find his master in me yet."

Canalis would have been glad to write some great political work, but he was afraid of compromising himself with French prose, whose requirements are severe for those who take four alexandrines to express a single idea. Of all the poets of our time, only three, Hugo, Théophile Gautier and De Vigny, have been able to unite the double glory of successful poetry and prose, as did also Racine and Voltaire, Molière and Rabelais. This is one of the rarest distinctions of French literature and should, above everything else, distinguish the real poet among us. So then the Faubourg Saint-Germain

poet did wisely to keep his chariot under the protecting roof of the administration. In taking the position of Maître des Requêtes, he experienced the need of a secretary, a friend who could take his place on many occasions, look after his interests with publishers, see to his laudations in the newspapers and, if need be, aid him in politics, to be, in short, his right-hand man. Many celebrated men in science, art or letters in Paris have one or two train-bearers, a captain of the guards or a chamberlain who live in the halo which surrounds them, a species of aides-de-camp intrusted with delicate missions, even allowing themselves to be compromised, if necessary, while working at the pedestal of their idol; neither altogether their servants nor yet their equals; bold in their defense, the first in the breach, covering their retreats, occupying themselves in their interest and devoted as long as their illusions last, or until their desires are satisfied. Some satellites recognize a slight ingratitude in their great men; others perceive that they are simple tools and tire of the position; few are contented with that sweet equality of feeling, the only reward which one ought to seek in an intimacy with a superior mind—a reward which satisfied Ali when Mahomet raised him to his level. Many of these men, misled by their vanity, presume themselves to be as capable as the great man himself. Devotion, such as Modeste conceived it, is indeed rare, especially when it is given without substantial results and without hope. Nevertheless, some Mennevals

exist, and perhaps more often at Paris than elsewhere, men who really cherish a life led in the shadow, with a quiet devotion to work, wandering Benedictines to whom society offers no other monastery. These courageous lambs express in their actions, in their inner life, the poetry to which writers give verbal expression. They are poets by nature, by their secret meditations and tenderness, as others are poets by expression in the fields of literature at so much a verse! like Lord Byron, like all those who live, alas!—by their ink, the Hippocrene water of to-day, in the absence of power itself.

Attracted by the reputation of Canalis, and the fair future promised by that pretended political intelligence; and advised by Madame d'Espard, who acted in this for the Duchesse de Chaulieu, a young counselor of the Cour des Comptes was appointed secretary to the poet and was petted by him as a speculator caresses his first client. The beginning of the companionship thus formed bore a strong resemblance to friendship. This young man had already served in this capacity to one of the ministers who left the office in 1827; but the minister had taken care to procure him a situation in the Audit Office. Ernest de la Brière, then about twenty-seven years of age, was decorated with the Legion of Honor, but without fortune except his salary. He possessed a knowledge of business and, after having spent four years in a minister's office, was well qualified for the position. Of a sweet, amiable disposition with a modest heart full of good

sentiments, he never wished to be in the foreground. He loved his country and he wished to serve her, but notoriety embarrassed him. He preferred rather to be the secretary to a Napoléon than to be the prime minister.

Ernest, having become the friend of Canalis, did a great amount of work for him, but in eighteen months he recognized the barrenness of this nature, poetic only through its literary expression. The truth of the popular proverb, "it is not the cowl that makes the friar," is especially applicable to literature. It is extremely rare to find harmony between talent and character: the faculties are not the summary of the man. This separation whose phenomena cause astonishment, springs from an unexplored, perhaps, unexplorable mystery. The brain and its products of all kinds,—for in the arts the hand of man follows up the brain,—are a world apart blooming beneath the cranium, in a perfect independence of the sentiments, of that which is called the virtues of a citizen, of the father of a family, or of the private man. However, this is not absolute. Nothing is absolute with man. It is certain that the dissipated man will throw away his talents in his orgies, that the drunkard will waste them in his libations, while the good man cannot attain talents by wholesome living; nevertheless, it is also almost proven that Virgil, the painter of love, never loved a Dido, and that Rousseau, the model citizen, had pride enough to supply a whole aristocracy. Nevertheless, Michael Angelo and Raphael have offered

the happy harmony of genius and character. Talent, with men, is then as to morals, what beauty is with women,—simply a promise. Let us doubly admire the man in whom we find heart and character equal in perfection to the talent. In finding the poet an ambitious egoist, the worst kind of an egoist, for there are some amiable forms of the vice, Ernest felt a kind of shame at leaving him. Good souls do not easily break their bonds, especially those which they have themselves voluntarily tied. The secretary then lived happily with the poet when Modeste's letter arrived, but as one always lives happily with anyone by always sacrificing one's self, La Brière took into consideration the frankness with which Canalis had opened his heart to him. Besides, the defects of this man, who will be esteemed great during his life, and who will be fêted as Marmontel was, were the reverse side of his brilliant qualities. Thus without his vanity, without his pretension, perhaps he would not have been gifted with that sonorous diction, a necessary instrument of the political life of to-day. His sharpness bordered upon rectitude, upon loyalty. His ostentation is lined with generosity. The results profit society; the motives concern God.

But when Modeste's letter arrived, Ernest no longer deceived himself about Canalis. The two friends had just breakfasted and were talking in the study of the poet, who occupied then an apartment on the ground floor at the end of a courtyard looking out upon a garden.

CANALIS, LA BRIÈRE AND MODESTE'S LETTER

"Oh, how I should love a woman to come to me!" exclaimed La Brière, restraining a tear. "All I can say to you, my dear Canalis, is, that it is never a poor girl who reaches towards a celebrated man; she has too much mistrust, too much vanity, too much fear. It is always a star, a—"

"A princess," exclaimed Canalis.

the happy harmony of [illegible] character. Talent, with men, is then as to morals, what beauty is with women, —simply a promise. Let us doubly admire the man in whom mind and heart and character equal in perfection to talent. In finding the poet an ambitious egoist, the worst kind of an egoist, for there are some amiable forms of the vice, Ernest felt a kind of shame at leaving him. Good souls do not easily break their bonds, especially those which they have themselves voluntarily tied. The secretary then lived happily with the poet when Modeste's letter arrived, but as one always lives happily with anyone by always sacrificing one's self, La Brière took into consideration the frankness with which Canalis had opened his heart to him. Besides, the defects of this man, who will be esteemed great during his life, and who will be effaced as Marmontel was, were the reverse side of his brilliant qualities.

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"Oh, how I should love a woman to come to me!" exclaimed La Brière, restraining a tear. "All I can say to you, my dear Canalis, is, that it is never a poor girl who reaches towards a celebrated man; she has too much mistrust, too much vanity, too much fear. It is always a star, a—"

"A princess," exclaimed Canalis.

CANALIS, LA BRIÈRE AND MODESTE'S LETTER

"A princess," exclaimed Canalis.

"It is always a star, a—"

"Oh, how I should love a woman to come to me!" exclaimed La Brière, restraining a tear. "All I can say to you, my dear Canalis, is, that it is never a poor girl who reaches towards a celebrated man; she has too much mistrust, too much timidity, too much fear.



"Oh," exclaimed Canalis, "I was right in telling Madame de Chaulieu the other day, that I ought to publish some new poem. The admiration for me is falling off, for it is some time since I have received any anonymous letters."

"From a stranger?" asked La Brière.

"A stranger! A D'Este and from Havre! It is evidently an assumed name," and Canalis handed the letter to La Brière. This poem, this hidden exaltation, in short, Modeste's heart, was recklessly spread out by the gesture of a coxcomb.

"It is beautiful!" exclaimed the lawyer, "thus to attract to one's self the most chaste sentiments, to force a poor woman out of the habits which education, nature and society mark out for her; to force her to break down conventionalities.—What privileges genius acquires! A letter like this which I hold, written by a young girl, a true young girl, without mental reservation, with enthusiasm,—"

"Well?" said Canalis.

"Well, if one had suffered as much as Tasso, one should feel recompensed!" exclaimed La Brière.

"One says that to himself at the first, at the second letter," said Canalis, "but when it is the thirtieth!—Or when a man has found that the young enthusiast is not quite moral; or when, at the end of the brilliant path traversed by the exaltation of the poet, a man sees an old Englishwoman seated upon a milestone, who holds out her hand to him!—or, when an angel in correspondence changes into a poor girl of mediocre beauty, who is

seeking a husband!—Ah, then one's effervescence ceases."

"I commence to believe," said La Brière smilingly, "that glory has something poisonous in it, like certain brilliant flowers."

"And then, my friend," replied Canalis, "all these women, even if they are sincere, they have an ideal, and you rarely attain to it. They do not say to themselves that the poet is a man quite vain, as I am taxed with being; they never imagine that he is a man dominated by a sort of feverish agitation which makes him disagreeable, changeable; they desire he should be always great, always handsome; they never think that talent is a disease; that Nathan lives with Florine; that D'Arthez is too fat; that Joseph Bridau is too thin; that Béranger limps and that their own particular god can have catarrh! A Lucien de Rubempré, poet and good fellow, is a phœnix. Why then go in search of miserable compliments and receive the cold shower-baths which are given by the stupified looks of disillusioned women?"

"The true poet," said La Brière, "should then remain hidden like God in the centre of his worlds, to be seen only by his creations."

"Glory would then cost too much," replied Canalis. "There are good things in life! See!" said he, as he took a cup of tea, "when a noble and beautiful woman loves a poet, she hides herself neither in the upper nor in the stage-boxes of the theatre, like a duchess infatuated with an actor. She feels

herself strong enough, sufficiently guarded by her beauty, by her fortune, by her name, to say, as in all epic poems: *'I am the nymph Calypso in love with Telemachus.'* Mystery is the resource of petty minds. For some time I have not replied to these masked epistles—"

"Oh, how I should love a woman to come to me!" exclaimed La Brière, restraining a tear. "All I can say to you, my dear Canalis, is, that it is never a poor girl who reaches towards a celebrated man; she has too much mistrust, too much vanity, too much fear. It is always a star, a —"

"A princess," exclaimed Canalis, bursting into laughter, "is it not, who descends to him?—My dear fellow, that happens once in a hundred years. Such love is like the flower which blooms once in a century. The princesses young, rich and beautiful, are too much occupied; they are surrounded, like all rare plants, with a hedge of idiotic gentlemen, well-educated but empty as the elder-trees. My dream, alas! the crystal of my dream bordered from Corrèze here with garlands of flowers, with what fervor!—Ah, let us not talk of it any more! It has been in fragments for a long time at my feet.—No, no, every anonymous letter is a beggar! And what demands! Write to this little person, supposing she is young and pretty, and you will see! There is nothing else to do. A man cannot reasonably love every woman. Apollo, at least the Apollo of the Belvedere, is an elegant consumptive, who ought to take care of himself."

"But when a creature comes in this manner, her excuse should be the certainty of eclipsing in tenderness, in beauty, the most adored mistress," said Ernest, "and then a little curiosity,—"

"Ah," replied Canalis, "you will allow me, you most youthful Ernest, to adhere to the lovely duchess who makes my happiness."

"You are right, entirely right," replied Ernest. Nevertheless, the young secretary read Modeste's letter and re-read it, endeavoring to discover its hidden spirit.

"There is not an exaggerated phrase in it. She does not ascribe genius to you; she addresses your heart," he said to Canalis. "This perfume of modesty and this proposed contract would tempt me—"

"Write yourself, reply, go yourself to the end of the adventure; I wager you will receive a poor salary for it," exclaimed Canalis, smiling. "Go. You may tell me about it in three months, if it last three months.—"

Four days later, Modeste received the following letter, written on fine paper, protected by two envelopes and sealed with the arms of Canalis.

II

TO MADEMOISELLE O. D'ESTE-M.

"Mademoiselle,

"The admiration for beautiful writings, supposing that mine are such, admits of an indescribable

something of sanctity and of candor, which protects against all raillery and justifies before every tribunal the step which you have taken in writing to me. Before all, I ought to thank you for the pleasure which such testimony always causes, even if not merited; for the poets and versifiers deem themselves entirely worthy of them, so little is self-love a substance refractory to praise. The best proof of friendship which I can give to a stranger, in exchange for this cure which would heal the stings of the critic, will be to share with her the harvest of my experience at the risk of causing her living illusions to fly away, will it not?

"Mademoiselle, the most splendid ornament of a young girl is the flower of a holy, pure, irreproachable life. Are you alone in the world? Then all is said. But if you have a family, a father or a mother, think of all the sorrow which may follow a letter like yours, addressed to a poet whom you do not know personally. All writers are not angels; they have faults. There are among them those who are thoughtless, giddy, foolish, ambitious, and dissipated; and, however imposing innocence may be, however chivalrous the French poet may be, you might meet in Paris more than one degenerate minstrel ready to cultivate your affection in order to deceive it. Your letter would then be interpreted otherwise than I have done. A thought would be seen in it which you have not put there and which in your innocence you do not suspect. There are as many different characters as there are authors.

I am exceedingly flattered that you deem me worthy of understanding you; but if you had fallen upon a talented hypocrite, upon a scoffer whose books are melancholy and whose life is a continual carnival, you would have found at the close of your sublime imprudence, a bad man, some frequenter of the green-room or a hero of the tavern. You do not perceive among the bowers of clematis where you meditate upon poetry, the odor of the cigars which make the manuscripts unpoetical; even as in going to a ball, wearing the resplendent work of the jeweler, you do not think of the vigorous arms, of the workmen in their shirt-sleeves, of the humble workshops from which spring forth radiantly these flowers of workmanship. Let us go still farther! In what can the dreamy and solitary life which you lead, no doubt, on the seashore, interest a poet whose mission is to divine all, since he ought to paint everything? Our young girls are so accomplished that none of Eve's daughters can vie with them! What reality is ever as good as the dream? Now, what will you gain, you a young girl educated to become the virtuous mother of a family, in initiating yourself into the terrible agitations of a poet's life in this frightful capital, which can be only defined by these words: a Hell which one loves! If it is the desire to enliven the monotonous existence of a curious young girl which has put the pen into your hand, has not that the appearance of depravity? What signification shall I give to your letter? Do you belong to a condemned caste, and do you

seek a lover far from you? Are you mortified at being homely, and are you conscious of a beautiful soul without a confidant? Alas! a sad conclusion; you have done too much or not enough. Either we must stop here, or if you continue, tell me more than in the letter you have written to me. But, mademoiselle, if you are young, if you have a family, if you feel in your heart that you have celestial ointment to pour out, as did the Magdalene at the feet of Jesus, allow yourself to be appreciated by a man worthy of you, and become as every good young girl should: an excellent wife, a virtuous mother of a family. A poet is the saddest conquest which a young girl can make; he has too much vanity, too many sharp angles which must wound the legitimate vanities of a woman, and kill the tenderness of an inexperienced life. A poet's wife should love him for a long time before she marries him; she should bring herself to have the charity of angels, their indulgence, the virtues of motherhood. There are only the germs of these qualities in young girls, mademoiselle.

"Listen to the whole truth, for do I not owe it to you in return for your intoxicating flattery? If it be glorious to marry a man of great renown, one soon perceives that a superior man is, in all that makes a man, like other men. Thus he realizes so much the less, because prodigies are expected of him. He becomes like a woman whose beauty is overpraised and of whom we say on seeing her for the first time: 'I thought her far more beautiful.'

She does not respond to the demands of the portrait traced by the fairy to whom I owe your note,—the Imagination! In short, the qualities of the mind only develop and bloom in an invisible sphere; the poet's wife only sees the inconvenience of them; she sees the jewels made, instead of adorning herself with them. If the brilliancy of an exceptional position has fascinated you, learn that the pleasures of it are soon consumed. It makes one irritable to find so much roughness in a position which at a distance seems smooth; so much coldness on a brilliant summit! Then, as women never step into the world of difficulties, they soon cease to appreciate that which they admired, when they see, as they think, at the first sight, the inner mechanism of it.

"I close with a last consideration, in which you will be wrong to see a disguised request. It is the advice of a friend. The interchange of souls can only be established between people disposed to hide nothing from each other. Will you show yourself as you are to a stranger? I stop at the consequences of this thought.

"Receive, mademoiselle, the homage which we owe to all women, even to those who are strangers and masked."

To have worn this letter between her corsets and her flesh, over her palpitating heart throughout an entire day!—To have reserved the reading of it for the hour when all the world slept,—midnight,—

after having waited for this solemn silence with the anxieties of an imagination on fire!—To have blessed the poet, to have read in advance a thousand letters, to have imagined everything except this drop of cold water, falling upon the vaporous forms of fancy, and dissolving them as prussic acid does life!—That was something from which to hide one's self, although alone, as did Modeste, with her face in the pillows, to extinguish the candle and weep.—

This happened during the first days of July. Modeste arose, walked up and down her chamber and opened her window. She wished air. The perfume of the flowers mounted to her with that freshness peculiar to odors during the night. The sea, illumined by the moon, shone like a mirror. A nightingale sang in a tree in the Vilquin park.

"Ah, there is the poet," said Modeste to herself, as her anger subsided.

The most bitter reflections succeeded each other in her mind. She felt herself piqued to the quick; she wished to re-read the letter; she relighted the candle; she studied this carefully worded prose, and finished by hearing the croaking voice of the real world.

"He is right and I am wrong," she said to herself. "But, how can one believe that one will find one of Molière's old men, under the starry robe of the poet?"—

When a woman or a young girl is taken in the deed, she conceives a profound hatred against the witness, the author or object of her fault. Thus

the true, the natural, the wild Modeste, felt in her heart a frightful desire to get the mastery over this spirit of rectitude, and to precipitate him into some contradiction and so return him blow for blow. This pure child, whose mind alone had been corrupted both by her reading, by the long agony of her sister, and by the dangerous meditations of solitude, was surprised by a ray of sunshine upon her face. She had passed three hours roaming upon the borders of the immense sea of doubt. Such nights are never forgotten. Modeste went directly to her little Chinese table, a present from her father, and wrote a letter dictated by the infernal spirit of vengeance which boils in the bottom of the hearts of young persons.

*

III

TO MONSIEUR DE CANALIS

"Monsieur,

"You are certainly a great poet, but you are something more than that. You are a good man. After having had so much loyal frankness with a young girl who stood on the side of an abyss, have you enough left to reply without the least hypocrisy, without subterfuge, to the following question?

"Would you have written the letter I hold in my hand in reply to mine, would your ideas and your language have been the same, if someone had said in your ear that which may be true: Mademoiselle O. D'Este-M. is worth six millions and does not wish a fool for a master?

"Admit for a moment that this supposition is true. Be with me what you are with yourself; do not fear anything. I am older than my twenty years. No frankness would injure you in my mind. When I have read your confidence, if you still deign to give it to me, you will then receive a reply to your first letter.

"After having admired your talent, so often sublime, permit me to render homage to your delicacy and your probity, which compel me to call myself always,

"Your humble servant,

"O. D'Este-M."

When Ernest de la Brière had this letter in his hands, he went to walk on the boulevards, his soul being agitated as a frail craft by a tempest, when the winds blow from all points of the compass at every moment. For a young man such as one often meets, for a true Parisian, all would have been expressed in this sentence: "She is a little vixen!" But for a fellow whose soul was noble and beautiful, this kind of oath administered, this appeal to Truth, had the virtue of awakening the three judges crouching in the depths of all consciences. Honor, Truth and Justice, standing erect, cried energetically. "Ah, dear Ernest," said Truth, "you would certainly not have given this lesson to a rich heiress! Ah, my boy, you would have left quickly for Havre to learn if the young girl were beautiful, and you would have felt very unhappy at the preference accorded to genius; and if you could have supplanted your friend, to have put yourself in his place, Mademoiselle D'Este would have been a divinity!"—"How," said Justice, "you find fault, you penniless people of mind, at seeing rich girls married to beings whom you would not make your porters! You rail against the practical character of the century, which is eager to unite money with money, and never some fine young man full of talent, without fortune, to some beautiful young girl noble and rich. Here is a girl who revolts against the spirit of the age! And the poet replies to her with an unfeeling blow upon her heart!"—"Rich or poor, young or old, beautiful or homely,

this young girl is right. She has intelligence, she rolls the poet in the mire of personal interest," exclaimed Honor; "she deserves a sincere, noble and frank reply, and above all, the expression of your thoughts! Examine yourself! Sound your heart and purge it of its cowardices. What would Molière's Alceste say?" And La Brière, having set out from the Boulevard Poissonière, walked so slowly, lost in thought, that it was almost an hour later when he reached the Boulevard des Capucines. He went by the quay to reach the Court of Audits, then situated near the Sainte-Chapelle. But instead of verifying accounts, he remained under the influence of his perplexities.

"She has not six millions. That is evident," he said to himself. "But that is not the question.—"

Six days later, Modeste received the following letter:—

IV

TO MADEMOISELLE O. D'ESTE-M.

"Mademoiselle,

"You are not a D'Este. This name is only a nom-de-plume to hide your own. Does a man owe the revelations which you solicit, to one who deceives about herself? Listen. I will reply to your request by another. Are you of an illustrious family? Of a noble family? Of a family belonging

to the middle-class? Certainly the moral status does not change. It is one and the same, but its obligations vary according to the social sphere. Even as the sun illuminates situations in varied ways, producing there the differences which we admire, it conforms social duty to rank and position. The peccadillo of the soldier is a crime with the general, and vice-versa. The observances are not the same for a peasant girl who reaps; for a working girl at fifteen sous a day; for the daughter of a small retail dealer; for a girl of the middle-class; for the child of a rich commercial house; for the young heiress of a noble family; for a daughter of the house of D'Este. A king should not stoop to pick up a piece of gold, but the laborer ought to retrace his steps to find six sous which he has lost, although both should obey the laws of economy. A D'Este with six millions, may put on a broad-brimmed hat with plumes, brandish her whip; mount her Barbary steed and come in her riding habit embroidered with gold, followed by lackeys, to a poet, saying: "I love poetry and I desire to expiate the wrongs of Leonora towards Tasso!"—while the young daughter of a merchant would cover herself with ridicule in imitating her. To what social class do you belong? Reply sincerely and I will reply in the same manner to the questions which you have asked.

"Not having the good fortune of knowing you, and being already bound by a sort of poetical communion, I do not wish to offer you common homage.

Perhaps it is already a triumphant malice to have embarrassed a man who publishes his books."

The lawyer was not wanting in that cleverness in which a man of honor may indulge himself. By return mail, he received the reply.

V

TO MONSIEUR DE CANALIS

"You are more and more reasonable, my dear poet. My father is a count. Our principal ancestor was a cardinal of that period when cardinals were almost the equals of kings. To-day our house, half-fallen, ends with me; but I possess the necessary qualities to enter into every court and into every chapter-house in Europe. We are as good as the Canalises. Deem yourself fortunate that I do not send you our coat-of-arms. Try to reply as sincerely as I have done. I await your reply to learn if I may still call myself, as now,

"Your servant,

"O. D'ESTE-M."

"How she abuses her advantages, this little creature!" exclaimed De la Brière. "But is she frank?"

No man can be for four years the private secretary of a minister, and live in Paris, without observing these intrigues with impunity, and the

purest soul is more or less intoxicated by the exhilarating atmosphere of this imperial city. Happy at not being Canalis, the young lawyer secured a place in the mail-coach for Havre, after having written a letter in which he deferred his reply upon the ground of the importance of the confession demanded, and upon the pressure of work. He took the precaution to have given to him by the director-general of the mails, a word to the director at Havre, which asked for silence and co-operation. Ernest could in this way see Françoise Cochet come to the post office and follow her without difficulty. Guided by her, he reached the heights of Ingouville, and at the window of the Chalet, he saw Modeste.

"Well, Françoise?" asked the young girl, to which the servant replied: "Yes, mademoiselle, I have one."

Struck by the beauty of this heavenly blond, Ernest retraced his steps and inquired from a passer-by the name of the owner of this magnificent dwelling.

"That one?" asked the passer-by, pointing to the estate.

"Yes, my friend."

"Oh! that belongs to Monsieur Vilquin, one of the richest ship-owners of Havre, a man who does not know his own fortune."

"I do not recall a Cardinal Vilquin in history," said the lawyer to himself, as he walked towards Havre to return to Paris.

Naturally he questioned the director of the post

office about the Vilquin family. He learned that they possessed an immense fortune, that Monsieur Vilquin had a son and two daughters, one of whom had married the son of Althor. Prudence prevented La Brière from seeming to have any design upon the Vilquins. As it was, the director looked at him slyly.

"Is there anyone with them at this time, besides the family?" he asked further.

"At this moment, the Hérouville family are there. There is a talk of the marriage of the young duke with the younger Mademoiselle Vilquin."

"There was the famous Cardinal d'Hérouville under the Valois," La Brière said to himself, "and under Henry IV. the terrible marshal, who was created a duke."

Ernest left, having seen enough of Modeste to dream of her, to think that rich or poor, if she had a beautiful soul, he would make her Madame de la Brière willingly enough, and he resolved to continue the correspondence.

Try then to remain unknown, poor women of France; to carry on the smallest little romance in the midst of a civilization which notes upon the public squares the hour of the departure and arrival of the trains, which counts the letters, which stamps them doubly with the precise moment when they are thrown into the boxes and when they are distributed; which numbers the houses; which registers upon the tax-rolls the different stories, after having taken account of the doors and windows;

which will soon possess all its territory represented in its smallest holdings, with their most minute details, upon the vast sheets of the land survey, work of a giant ordained by a giant! Try then, imprudent girls, to shelter yourselves not from the eye of the police, but from this incessant prattling, which, in the meanest village, scrutinizes the most unimportant actions, counts the dishes of the dessert at the house of the prefect, and notices the melon rinds at the door of the poor man; which endeavors to hear the money when the hand of economy adds it to the treasury, and which every evening at the hearthstone corner, estimates the amount of the fortunes in the canton, in the town, in the department! Modeste had escaped by a common instance of mistaken identity from the most innocent espionage for which Ernest already reproached himself. But what Parisian would allow himself to be the dupe of a little country girl? To be the dupe of nothing; that horrid maxim dissolves all the noblest sentiments of man.

One can easily imagine to what a struggle of sentiments this good young man was a prey, by the letter which he wrote and in which each blow of the scourge received by his conscience, left its trace.

Behold, then, that which some days later, Modeste read at her window on a beautiful summer day.

VI

TO MADEMOISELLE O. D'ESTE-M.

"Mademoiselle,

"Yes, without any hypocrisy, if I had been certain that you had an immense fortune, I should have acted entirely different. Why? I have sought the reason. Here it is. There is in us an innate sentiment, developed beyond measure by society, which pushes us to the pursuit, to the possession of happiness. The greater part of men confound happiness with its means, and fortune in their eyes is the largest element of happiness. I should then have tried to please you, influenced by the social sentiment which at all times has made wealth a religion. At least, I believe so. One ought not to expect in a man, still young, that wisdom which substitutes good sense for the pleasure of the senses, and in sight of the prey the animal instinct, hidden in man's heart, pushes him on. Instead of a lesson, you would then have received compliments and flatteries from me. Should I have esteemed myself? I doubt it. Mademoiselle, in this case success brings absolution, but happiness, —that is another thing. Should I have mistrusted my wife, if I had won her thus? Most assuredly. Your proceeding would sooner or later have resumed its character. Your husband, however great you might have made him, would have finished by reproaching you for having dishonored him, and you

yourself would, perhaps, sooner or later come to despise him. The ordinary man cuts the Gordian knot which constitutes a marriage for money with the sword of tyranny. The strong man pardons. The poet laments. Such, mademoiselle, is the reply which my honesty compels me to make.

"Now listen a little. You have had the triumph of causing me to reflect deeply, both upon you whom I do not know enough, and upon myself whom I know slightly. You have had the ability to stir well the bad thoughts which lie stagnant at the bottom of all hearts. But from these, something generous has gone out of me, and I salute you with my most gracious blessings as one salutes on the ocean a lighthouse which has shown us the rock upon which we might perish. This is my confession, for I would lose neither your esteem nor my own, at the price of all the treasures on earth.

"I wished to know who you were. I returned to Havre, where I saw Françoise Cochet. I followed her to Ingouville and I saw you in the midst of your magnificent villa. You are as beautiful as a woman of a poet's dreams; but I do not know whether you are Mademoiselle Vilquin disguised as Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, or Mademoiselle d'Hérouville disguised as Mademoiselle Vilquin.

"Although all is fair in war, this espionage made me blush and I stopped in my quest. You have aroused my curiosity. Do not be angry with me for having been a little like a woman. Is it not the poet's right? Now I have opened my heart to you.

I have allowed you to read it, and you may believe in the sincerity of that which I am going to add. Although the glance which I cast at you was rapid, it has sufficed to modify my judgment. You are at one and the same time, poetry and a poet, before being a woman. You possess something more precious than beauty. You are the beau ideal of art, of fancy.— The proceeding, which is censurable in young girls dedicated to an ordinary destiny, changes for those who are endowed with the character which I ascribe to you. There are exceptions among the large number thrown by the chance of social life upon the earth, to make up a generation. If your letter is the termination of long poetical reveries upon the fate which the social law reserves for women; if you have desired, misled by the inclination of a superior and educated mind, to learn the intimate life of a man to whom you accord the chance of genius;—in short, to create for yourself a friendship secure from the ordinary relations, with a soul like your own, in escaping from all the conditions of your sex; surely you are an exception! The law which serves to measure the actions of the masses is then too narrow to measure your resolution. But the phrase in my first letter returns then in all its force:—you have done too much, or not enough. Accept then, my renewed thanks for the service which you have rendered me by obliging me to fathom my heart. You have rectified in me this error, common enough in France, that marriage is a means to fortune. From the depth of my troubled

conscience, a holy voice has spoken to me. I have solemnly sworn to myself to make my own fortune and not to be influenced in my choice of a companion for life by motives of cupidity. Then I have condemned, I have repressed the unbecoming curiosity which you have excited in me. You have not six millions. It would be impossible, at Havre, for a young person possessed of such a fortune to remain unknown. You would have been sought out by that pack of families of the peerage which I see in Paris hunting heiresses among the great families, and who would have sent an ambassador to your Vilquins. Thus, the sentiments that I have expressed to you have become as fixed as an absolute rule, robbed of all the influence of romance. Prove to me now that you have one of those souls which can forgive the disobedience to common law and your spirit will comprehend this second letter as you did my first. If you be destined to the life of the middle class, obey that iron law which society upholds. As a superior woman I admire you; but if you are tempted to obey an instinct which you ought to repress, I pity you; thus the social state decrees. The wonderful moral of that great domestic epic *Clarissa Harlowe* is that the legitimate and honest love of the victim leads her to her ruin, because it is conceived, developed and pursued in spite of the family. The family, silly and cruel though it may be, is right in its stand against Lovelace. The family is Society. Believe me, the glory of a girl as well as a woman will always be

in suppressing her ardent caprices within the limits of conventionalities. If I had a daughter who gave promise of becoming a Madame de Staël, I would rather see her dead at fifteen. Can you imagine a daughter of yours exhibiting herself upon the ladder of fame or flaunting herself for the plaudits of the multitude without experiencing a thousand poignant regrets? No matter how lofty a woman's imagination may rise through the secret poetry of her dreams, she should sacrifice this upon the sacred altar of home. All the ambition, the genius, the aspirations of a young girl toward the good and the sublime belong to the man whom she accepts, the children she bears. I see that you would secretly wish to enlarge the narrow circle to which every woman's life is limited and to put passion and love in marriage. Ah! it is a beautiful dream, it is not impossible, it is difficult but it might be realized by the despair of souls—forgive me this expression, which has become ridiculous and out of place.

"If it be platonic friendship you seek, it will bring you trouble in the future. If your letter were a jest, discontinue it, I beseech you. Is then, this little romance finished? If so, it will not be without fruit. My honor is aroused and you will have acquired a more exact view of social life. Turn your attention towards actual life and put the transient enthusiasms which you gather from literature into the virtues of your sex.

"Adieu, mademoiselle. Accord me the honor of your esteem. After having seen you, or she whom

I believe to be you, I have thought your letter very natural,—so beautiful a flower must turn toward the sun of poetry. Love, then, poetry as you must love flowers, music, the grandeur of the ocean, the beauties of nature—as an ornament of the soul; but remember all that I have had the honor to say to you about poets. Take care not to marry a fool; seek carefully the companion whom God has created for you. Believe me, there exist many minds capable of appreciating you, of rendering you happy. If I were rich, and you were poor, I would some day place my fortune and my heart at your feet, for I believe that you possess a soul full of beauty and loyalty and I would confide my life and my honor to you with perfect security. Once more, adieu, fair daughter of Eve the fair."

The reading of this letter, swallowed as a drop of water in the desert, lifted the mountain which weighed upon Modeste's heart; for she saw the mistake she had made in arranging her plan and she repaired it at once by giving Françoise some envelopes, on which she had written her own address at Ingouville and advising her to be seen no more at the Chalet. Françoise went home and put each letter from Paris into one of these envelopes and put it secretly into the mail at Havre. Modeste determined to be on the threshold of the Chalet at the hour when the postman passed to receive the letter herself.

This reply to her letter, in which the noble heart

of poor La Brière, beating as it did under the brilliant disguise of Canalis, excited in Modeste feelings as varied as the waves which come to die one after the other on the shore, while with her eyes fixed on the ocean, she gave herself up to the happiness of having attracted an angelic soul in the Parisian sea; of having discovered that with men of genius the heart is, sometimes, in harmony with their talent, and for having been led aright by the magic voice of intuition. A powerful new interest animated her life. The confines of her pretty dwelling-place, the bars of her cage were broken and her thoughts soared forth on outspread wings.

"Oh! my father," she said looking toward the horizon, "come back and bring us great riches."

The response which Ernest de la Brière read five days later, will tell the reader her feelings better than any kind of commentary.

*

VII

TO MONSIEUR DE CANALIS

"My friend, allow me to give you this name, you have delighted me. I would not have you different from what you are in this letter, the first—oh! may it not be the last! Who save a poet could have understood and excused a young girl so graciously?

"I wish to speak to you with the same sincerity which you have used in the first lines of your letter. And first, I must say, that most fortunately, you do not know me. I can tell you with joy, I am neither that hideous Mademoiselle Vilquin, nor the most noble and wrinkled Mademoiselle d'Hérouville whose age vibrates between thirty and fifty, as she cannot decide on an exact figure. The Cardinal d'Hérouville flourished in the history of the church before our cardinal who was our only great family pride, for I do not count as remarkable the lieutenant-generals and the abbés who are celebrated for their little volumes and grand verses.

"Then, I do not live in the splendid Vilquin villa and I have not, thank Heaven, a ten-millionth part of a drop of that cold, counting-house blood in my veins. I come on one side from Germany and on the other from the south of France. I have the Teutonic revery in my mind and the vivacity of

Provence in my blood. I am noble on both sides of my house. Through my mother, I am associated with every page of the Almanach de Gotha. You will see that my precautions are well taken; it is neither in the power of man nor law to unmask my incognito. I will remain veiled, unknown. As to my appearance and *mes propres*, as the Normans say, reassure yourself. I am at least as beautiful as the young person—happy without knowing it—upon whom your eyes have rested, and I am not so poor either, although I do not have ten sons of the peers of France to accompany me on my walks! I have already seen the degrading comedy of the heiress adored for her millions, played for me. So do not attempt in any way, even for a wager, to seek me out. Alas! although free, I am watched, by myself first of all, and by people of courage who would not hesitate to put a knife in your heart, if you try to penetrate my retreat. I do not say this to excite your courage or your curiosity, I do not believe I have need of such measures to attract or interest you.

"I now reply to the second edition, considerably enlarged, of your first sermon.

"Will you hear a confession? Seeing you so distrustful, and believing me to be a Corinne—whose improvised verses always bored me—I said to myself that probably many Muses had already led you on, through your curiosity, into their valleys and you had been disposed to taste the fruits of their boarding-school inspiration—Oh! be assured of your safety with me, my friend. I love poetry, but

I have no *little verses* hidden in my pocket-book and my stockings are, and will always be, perfectly white. You will not be annoyed by trifles in one or two volumes. Indeed, if I ever say to you, 'Come,' you will not find—you know it now—a poor, homely old maid.—O my friend, if you knew how much I regret your visit to Havre! You have by this means modified what you call my romance. No, God alone in His power can estimate the treasure which I was reserving for the man noble enough, trustful enough, clear-sighted enough to come through faith in my letters, having penetrated, step by step, into the recesses of my heart, to meet me at our first rendezvous with the simplicity of a child! I can imagine this innocence in a man of genius. You have spoiled my treasure, but I forgive you. You live in Paris; and as you say, there is the *man* in the poet. Now you will take me for a little girl who cultivates a garden of illusions. Do not amuse yourself throwing stones at the broken windows of a château long since in ruins. How is it that you—man of mind as you are—have not guessed that when Mademoiselle d'Este read your first pedantic letter she said to herself: 'No, dear poet, my first letter was not the stone thrown by a child, strolling along the roads, who amuses herself by frightening by her random shots the owner, while reading his tax list under the shelter of his fruit trees; but rather a line thrown out by a fisherman from a high rock on the seashore, hoping to land a wonderful fish.'

"All that you say so beautifully of the family has my approval. The man who will please me and of whom I believe myself worthy, will possess both my heart and my life with the consent of my parents; for I will neither bring them sorrow nor surprise them; besides, they are without prejudice and I have the certainty of controlling their opinions. And so you see I feel strong against the illusions of my fancy. I have built my fortress with my own hands and I have allowed it to be fortified by the boundless devotion of those who watch over me as a treasure, not that I am not capable of defending myself, for fate has clothed me with a well-tried armor upon which is engraved the word DISDAIN. I have the deepest horror of all that is calculating, of what is not entirely pure, noble and disinterested. I worship the beautiful, the ideal, without being romantic, but I have been romantic too for myself alone, in my dreams. Also, I have recognized the truth of all you say—even to the verge of brutality—which you have written to me on the social side of life.

"For the time being, we are and we can only be, two friends. Why seek a friend in a stranger? you will say. Your person is unknown to me, but your mind, your heart, I know, and they please me. I feel an infinite longing for the unique confidence of a man of genius. I do not wish the poem of my heart wasted, it will shine for you as it might have shone for God alone. What can be more precious than a good comrade to whom one can tell all! How can you refuse the unpublished flowers of a young

girl's mind which fly toward you as naturally as beautiful insects fly toward the rays of the sun? I am sure that you have never encountered that good fortune of the mind: the confidences of a young girl! Listen to her prattle, accept the music which until now she has sung only for herself. Later if ours are sister souls, if our characters warrant it, some day an old servant with white hair, will await you on the wayside to conduct you to a chalet, a villa, a castle, a palace, I do not know yet what the yellow and brown flag of Hymen will be—the colors of Austria so powerful by marriage—nor if the dénouement will be possible; but acknowledge that it is poetic and that Mademoiselle d'Este is easily satisfied. Has she not left you your liberty? does she come on jealous feet to watch you in the salons of Paris? Has she imposed upon you the duties of an adventure, chains which paladins took upon themselves voluntarily in the olden times? No, she only demands a wholly mysterious and spiritual alliance. Come to my heart, then, when you are unhappy, wounded or weary. Tell me all, conceal nothing from me and I will have an elixir for all your griefs. I am only twenty, my friend, but I have the knowledge of one of fifty years, and I have unfortunately known through my other self all the horrors and delights of love. I know that the human heart may contain cowardice, infamy, nevertheless, I am the purest of young girls. No, I have no more illusions, but I have what is better,—faith and religion. See, I begin our confidences.

"Whoever my husband may be, that is, if I choose him, he will be able to sleep tranquilly or go to the East Indies and when he returns he will find me finishing the piece of tapestry begun at his departure, without meantime having had the eyes of man look into mine or the voice of man disturb my ear; and, in each stitch of my work, he will recognize a stanza of the poem of which he is the hero. Even should I be deceived by some beautiful though false personality, that man shall have all the flowers of my thoughts, all the delights of my tenderness, the remote sacrifice of a resignation, proud rather than humble. Yes, I do not intend to follow my husband in the world when he does not wish it; I would be the divinity of his hearth. That would be my religion. But why should I not test and choose the man to whom I shall be as life to the body? Is man ever tired of life? How can a woman thwart one whom she loves? That would be sickness rather than life. By life, I mean that beautiful health which makes a pleasure of each hour.

"But to return to your letter, which will ever be precious to me. Yes, jesting aside, it contains what I desire, an expression of prosaic sentiments as necessary to the family as air to the lungs, and without which happiness is not possible. To act as an honest man, to think as a poet, to love as a woman; that is what I would wish for in a friend, and now it is no longer a chimera.

"Adieu, my friend. Just now I am poor; that is

one of the reasons why I cling to my mask, my incognito, my impregnable fortress. I read your last verses in the *Revue* and with what delight after being initiated into the austere and secret grandeur of your soul.

"Will it make you unhappy to know that a young girl prays God fervently for you, that she makes of you her one thought, and that you have no rivals unless it be her father and her mother? Can there be any reason to reject these pages full of you, written for you, which will be read by no one else? Send me the same. I am still so little a woman that your confidences, provided that they are full and true, will suffice to make up the happiness of

"Your

"O. D'ESTE-M."

"Good Heavens! Am I then in love already?" cried the young secretary, when he found that he had sat for an hour with this letter in his hand after reading it. "What ought I to do? She believes that she is writing our great poet! ought I to continue this deception? Is she a woman of forty or a girl of twenty?"

Ernest was fascinated by the gulf of the unknown. The unknown is infinity of obscurity and nothing is more alluring. It arises from out that sombre stretch of fires, which at moments pierce it and color fancies á la Martynn. In a busy life like that of Canalis, an adventure of this kind is swept away like a corn-flower by a mountain torrent. But in

the life of a young secretary, waiting for the return to power of the system whose representative is his protector and who was prudently bringing up Canalis to be an influential politician, this pretty girl whom in his imagination he saw as the young blond, was to lodge herself in his heart and there cause unlimited havoc as in the romance of bourgeois life, like the proverbial fox in the barn-yard. Ernest occupied himself much, therefore, with the stranger in Havre, and he replied by the following letter, a studied letter, a pretentious letter, but one in which passion began to reveal itself through pique.

VIII

TO MADEMOISELLE D'ESTE-M.

"Mademoiselle, is it really fair in you to seat yourself in the heart of a poor poet with the mental reservation of letting it alone, if it is not according to your wishes, and bequeathing to him everlasting regrets by showing him for a few moments an image of perfection, even if it were only feigned, or at least a beginning of happiness? I was very improvident in soliciting that letter in which you began to unroll the elegant fabric of your ideas. A man can very well become enamored of a strange woman who understands how to unite so much boldness with so much originality; so much fancy with so much sentiment. Who would not

desire to know you, after having read that first confidence? It takes really great strength on my part to preserve my composure in thinking of you, for you have united all that troubles the heart and mind of man. However, I avail myself of the remaining composure which I possess at this moment to make you some modest representations. Do you believe, mademoiselle, that letters, more or less true in relation to life, more or less hypocritical, for the letters that we write each other will be the expression of the moment at which they are written, and not the general sense of our characters; do you believe, I say, that however beautiful they may be, they will ever replace the impression we make of ourselves by the evidence of daily life? Man is dual. There is the invisible life, that of the heart, for which letters may suffice, and the mechanical life to which alas! much more importance is attached than one thinks at your age. These two existences should correspond with the ideal which you caress, and which—let it be said in passing—is very rare. The pure, spontaneous, disinterested homage of a solitary soul, educated and chaste at the same time, is one of those celestial flowers whose colors and perfume are a solace for all sorrows, all wounds, all treachery which literary life at Paris admits of, and I thank you with a warmth equal to your own. But after this poetical exchange of my sorrows for the pearls of your charity, what can you expect? I have neither the genius nor the magnificent position of Lord Byron; above all, I have not the halo of his

pretended damnation and his false social misfortune; but what would you have hoped from him in a similar position? His friendship? Well, he who should have had only pride, was devoured by wounding and sickly vanities which discourage friendship. I, a thousand times less great, may I not have discords of character which render life disagreeable, make friendship the most difficult burden? —What would you receive in exchange for your day dreams? The wearisomeness of a life which could not be entirely yours? This contract is senseless. This is the reason. Listen. Your contemplated poem is only a plagiarism. A young girl of Germany, who was not like you only half German, but a whole-souled German, adored Goethe in the madness of her twenty years; she made him her friend, her religion, her god, although she knew he was married. Madame Goethe, as a good German, as the wife of a poet, lent herself to this worship in a very crafty way, but it did not cure Bettina. But what happened? The enthusiast ended by marrying some good, fat German.

"Between ourselves let us acknowledge that a young girl who would make herself the servant of genius, who would make herself his equal through the intellect, who would piously adore him until death, like one of those divine figures traced by painters on the panels of their mystic chapels, and who when Germany shall lose Goethe, will retire into some solitude never more to see anyone, as did the beloved of Bolingbroke, let us acknowledge that

this young girl will be a part of the glory of the poet as Mary Magdalene has ever been in the bloody triumph of our Savior. If this be the sublime, what do you say to the reverse of the picture?

"Being only the author of some appreciated poetry, I could not claim the honor of being worshiped as are Byron, Goethe, two giants of poetry and egotism. I am very little of a martyr; I have at the same time heart and ambition, I am still young and have my future to make. See me as I am. The favor of the king, the protection of his ministers, give me sufficient means to live on. I have all the outward bearing of a very ordinary man. I go to entertainments in Paris just like any other blockhead, but in a carriage whose wheels do not rest upon as solid a foundation as is the case with one whose income comes from government bonds.

"If I am not rich, neither have I the picturesque consolations given by living in a garret, by work misunderstood, by the glory in misery of certain men much greater than I; as D'Arthez for example. What prosaic dénouement do you see in the enchanting fancies of your youthful enthusiasm? Let us stop here. If I have had the good fortune to seem to you an earthly paragon, you have been for me something as luminous and elevated as the stars which but blaze forth to vanish suddenly. Let nothing tarnish this episode in our lives. By continuing in this way I could love you, could conceive one of those mad passions, which break down all obstacles, and which kindle in the heart fires whose violence

is alarming in proportion to its duration. And supposing that I should succeed with you, we should finish in the most ordinary way; a marriage, housekeeping and children—Oh! Bélise and Henriette Chrysale together! is it possible?—So then, adieu!"

*

IX

TO MONSIEUR DE CANALIS

"My friend, your letter has given me as much pain as pleasure. Soon, perhaps, we shall have only pleasure in reading each others' letters. Understand me thoroughly. We speak to God, we ask many things of Him, He remains silent. I wish to find in you the replies which God does not make to us. Can not the friendship of Mademoiselle de Gournay and Montaigne be repeated? Do you not know of the household of Sismonde de Sismondi in Geneva, the happiest home, I have been told, ever known, something like that of the Marquis and Marquise of Pescaire—happy until their old age? *Mon Dieu!* is it impossible that there should exist, at a distance from each other, two souls which respond as in a symphony, vibrating and producing a lovely melody? Man alone in creation is at the same time the harp, the musician and the listener. Do you think me uneasy and jealous after the manner of ordinary women? Do I not know that you go into society, and see there the most beautiful and intellectual women of Paris? May I not presume that one of these sirens condescends to entwine you with her cold, scaly arms and that she has made the reply whose prosaic consequences sadden me? There is, my friend, something more beautiful than

these flowers of Parisian coquetry; there exists a flower which grows on the Alpine peaks called men of genius, the pride of humanity, which they fertilize with the dews of heaven drawn by their lofty peaks. I would cultivate this flower and make it bloom, for its wild sweet fragrance will never fail us, it is eternal. Do me the honor to believe that there is nothing low or commonplace about me. If I had been Bettina, for I know to whom you allude, I should never have been Madame d'Arnim, and if I had been one of Byron's many loves, I should at this moment be in a convent. You have roused my sensitiveness. You do not know me, but you will know me. I feel within myself something sublime and of which I dare speak without vanity. God has put in my heart the root of that hybrid plant grown on those Alpine summits, of which I have just spoken and which I do not want to place in a flower-pot on my window-sill to see it die there. No, this magnificent, unique flower, with its intoxicating perfume, will never be dragged into the vulgarities of life—it is yours, yours which no other look shall wither, yours forever. Yes, dear poet, to you belong all my thoughts, even the most hidden, the most foolish; to you belongs without reserve, the heart of a young girl, an infinite affection. If your person does not suit me, I will not marry. I can live in the life of the heart, in your mind, in your sentiments, they please me and I will always be what I am,—your friend. Your nature is something beautiful in its morality, and that pleases me.

There will be my life. Do not contemn a young and pretty handmaiden who does not recoil in horror at the idea of one day becoming the aged companion of a poet, embodying, in a small measure, for him, the qualities of mother, housekeeper, and guide, while being a little his treasure. This handmaiden, so precious to the poet's life, is Friendship, pure and disinterested friendship to whom he can bring everything, who sometimes listens, while warning, who watches, while spinning by the evening lamp, in order to be there when the poet returns soaked by the rain or vexed in mind. That is my destiny, if perchance I have not that of a happy and devoted wife and I smile at either prospect. Do you think that France will be wronged because Mademoiselle d'Este will not give her country two or three sons; because she will not be another Madame Vilquin? As for me I shall never be an old maid. I shall become a mother in taking care of others and by my secret co-operation with the life of a great man, to whom I will relate my thoughts and my efforts here below. I have the most profound horror of commonplaceness. If I am free, if I am rich, I know that I am young and handsome; I will never belong to any idiot just because he happens to be the son of some French peer, or to some merchant who may lose all his fortune in a day, or to some handsome Adonis who will be the woman of the household, or to any man who would make me blush twenty times a day because I belonged to him. Be assured on that subject. My father has

too much respect for my wishes, and will never oppose them. If I please my poet, if he please me, the brilliant edifice of our love will tower so high that it will be perfectly inaccessible to any kind of misfortune. I am an eaglet, and you will see it in my eyes. I will not repeat to you that which I have already said, but will put it in fewer words, in avowing to you that I shall be the happiest of women to be imprisoned by love, as I am now by my father's will. Ah! my friend, let us reduce to reality the romance which came to us through the exercise of my will.

"A young girl with a lively imagination, shut up in a tower, is dying to be free to run in the park over which only her eyes can roam. She invents the means to break through her grating, jumps from her window, climbs over the wall of the park and goes to play with her neighbor. It is the everlasting comedy.—Well, this young girl is my soul, and the neighbor's park is your genius. Is it not entirely natural? Was there ever a neighbor who complained because his trellis was broken by pretty feet? That is for the poet to say. But does the sublime reasoner of the comedy of Molière wish for more reasons? Here they are. My dear Géronte, ordinarily marriages are made contrary to common sense. A family makes inquiries about a young man: if the Leander furnished by a neighboring friend, or angled for at a ball have not stolen, if he have no visible blemish, if he have ample fortune, if he have attended a college or a school of law,

having satisfied the vulgar ideas upon education, and if he dress well,—then he is permitted to visit a young woman who has been dressed all day to receive him, and whose mother cautions her to guard well her speech and permit nothing of her soul or heart to show itself in her face, on which must rest the fixed smile of a danseuse finishing a pirouette. She fortifies her also with the most positive instructions upon the danger of showing her real character or of appearing too well-educated. When the settlements have been agreed upon, the parents are good enough to invite the young people to make each other's acquaintance during the fugitive moments in which they are alone, when they talk and walk without any kind of freedom, because they already feel themselves allied. A man clothes his soul as well as his body at this time, and the girl does the same. This pitiable comedy interspersed with bouquets, ornaments, and theatre parties is called *paying your addresses*. You see what has disgusted me, and I wish to make the actual marriage follow a long marriage of the souls. A girl has only this moment in all her life in which reflection, foresight and experience may be useful to her. She gambles with her liberty and her happiness and you allow her neither the dice-box nor the dice; she risks all and is only allowed to be a spectator. I have the right, the will, the power and the permission to make my own unhappiness, and I make use of it as my mother did, who, guided by instinct, married the most generous, the most devoted, the most loving of men, with

whom she fell in love, for his beauty, at a party. I know that you are a poet, free and handsome. Be assured that I should never have chosen for a confidant one of your brothers in Apollo who was already married. If my mother was seduced by beauty, which is perhaps the genius of form, why should not I be attracted by the mind and form combined? Shall I not know you better in studying you through this correspondence than by the usual experience of 'receiving your addresses' for some months? 'That is the question,' as Hamlet says. But my proceeding, my dear Chrysale, has, at least, the advantage of not compromising our personalities. I know that love has its illusions and that every illusion has its to-morrow. In this may be found the reason of so many separations between lovers who believed themselves bound for life. The real proof of affection lies in two things,—suffering and happiness. Then, after having passed through this double ordeal of life, in which two beings have displayed their defects and their good qualities and have noted each other's characteristics through all, they can safely go down to the grave hand in hand.

"But, my dear Argante, who tells you that our little budding drama shall have no future?—At all events, shall we not have had the pleasure of our correspondence? I await your orders, monsieur, and remain with a full heart,

"Your handmaiden,

"O. D'ESTE-M."

X

TO MADEMOISELLE O. D'ESTE-M.

"You are a witch, and I love you! Is that what you wish, eccentric girl? Perhaps you wish to while away the tedium of your provincial life with the spectacle of the follies which a poet can commit? That would be very wicked of you. Your two letters imply just enough mischief to inspire a Parisian with this doubt. But I am no longer master of myself, my life and my future depend upon the answer which you will make to me. Tell me if the certainty of limitless affection, oblivious to all conventionalities, will move you; in short, if you will permit me to solicit you in marriage.—There will be quite enough uncertainty and agony for me in the torture of knowing whether my personality will please you. If you reply favorably to me, I shall change my life and bid adieu to many of the tiresome things which we are foolish enough to call happiness.

"Happiness, my dear, beautiful unknown, is that which you dream it to be; a complete blending of sentiments, a perfect harmony of the soul, a vivid impression of the ideal, such as God permits of it here below—of the common actions of life whose habits we must perforce obey, in short, the constancy of the heart more to be prized than that which we call fidelity. Can we claim that is making sacrifices, which is the pursuit of the supreme

good, the dream of poets, the dream of maidens, the poem which, at the commencement of life, as soon as thought tries its wings, every noble mind has caressed and fondly brooded over, only to see it dashed upon some stumbling block as hard as it is vulgar,—for, in almost all cases, the foot of Reality steps immediately upon this mysterious and rarely hatched egg. Therefore, I will not talk to you more of myself, nor of my past, nor of my character, nor of an affection half-maternal on the one side, and filial on mine, which you have already seriously changed, an effect upon my life which will explain the word sacrifice. Already you have made me very forgetful, not to say ungrateful; does that satisfy you? Oh! speak, say one word to me and I will love you forever until my eyes close in death,—as the Marquis de Pescaire loved his wife, as Romeo loved Juliet, and faithfully. Our life, for me at least, will be that 'felicity without pain,' of which Dante speaks as being the element of his *Paradiso*—a poem far superior to his *Inferno*. Strange as it may seem, it is not myself whom I doubt in the long reveries in which, like yourself perhaps, I delight in embracing the chimerical course of a longed-for existence—no, it is you. Yes, dear, I feel myself capable of loving in this way, to walk on toward the tomb with deliberate slowness and an ever-smiling face, with my loved one upon my arm, with no cloud to obscure the sunshine of our souls. Yes, I have the courage to contemplate our mutual old age, to see our hair white, like the

venerable historian of Italy, still animated by the same affection; but transformed according to the spirit of each period. Thus you see I can no longer be only your friend. Although you say Chrysale, Géronte and Argante live again in me, I am not yet old enough to drink from a cup held to my lips by the charming hands of a veiled woman without feeling a ferocious desire to tear off her mask and see the face it conceals. Write me no more or give me hope. I must see you or I must give up everything. Must I bid you adieu? Permit me to sign myself

"YOUR FRIEND?"

XI

TO MONSIEUR DE CANALIS

"What flattery! With what rapidity the grave Anselme has become the handsome Leander! To what ought I to attribute such a change? Is it to the black ink which I have put upon this white paper? to these ideas which are to the flowers of my soul what a rose drawn with a pencil is to the rose of the garden; or to the remembrance of the young girl taken for me, and who compared to me is what the chambermaid is to the mistress? Have we changed parts? Am I Reason, and you Fancy? But a truce to jesting. Your letter has given me the most intoxicating pleasures of the heart, the first which I do not owe to family affection. What are the ties of blood, as the poet says, which have

such weight upon ordinary minds, compared to those which Heaven forges for us in mysterious sympathies? Let me thank you—no, one does not give thanks for such things—receive my blessing for the happiness you have given me, be happy for the joy with which you have filled my soul. You have explained to me some apparent injustices of social life. There is an inexplicable brilliancy in glory, a virility which belongs only to man, and God has forbidden us women to wear this aureole, but has left to us love and tenderness, with which to refresh the foreheads bathed in its terrible light; I have found my mission, or rather you have confirmed me in it.

"Sometimes, my friend, I have risen in the morning in a mood of inconceivable sweetness. A kind of peace, tender and divine, has given me an idea of Heaven. My first thought was like a benediction. I called these mornings my sweet dawns of Germany in contrast to my sunsets of the South, full of heroic deeds, of battles, of Roman fêtes and of passionate poetry. Well, after having read that letter in which you show a feverish impatience, I had in my heart the freshness of one of those celestial awakenings when I loved the air and all nature, and felt myself destined to die for one I love. One of your poems, *The Maiden's Song,* describes those delicious moments, when joy is tender and prayer a necessity. This is my favorite. Do you wish me to tell you all my flattery in one? Well then, I believe you worthy to be me!—

"Your letter, although short, has allowed me to read you. Yes, I have divined tumultuous struggles, your piqued curiosity, your plans, the faggots brought—by whom?—for affection's pyre. But I do not yet know you well enough to gratify your demand. Listen, dear one, mystery allows me this abandon which permits the depths of the soul to be seen. Once we meet, good-bye to our mutual knowledge. Will you make a compact? Was the first one to your disadvantage? You gained my esteem by it and it is a good deal, my friend, to have admiration added to esteem.

"Here it is. Write me first your life in a few words, then relate to me your life from day to day at Paris without any disguise and as if you were talking to an old friend; afterwards, our friendship shall advance another step. I will see you, that I promise, and it is much. All this, dear, is neither an adventure nor an intrigue. I tell you beforehand that there cannot result from it any affair, as you men say among yourselves. It concerns my life, which causes me sometimes fearful remorse at the thoughts which fly in flocks to you; it concerns the life of an adored father and mother whom my choice must please, and who must find a true son in my friend.

"Tell me! to what extent can superb minds like yours—to which God gives the wings of His angels, without always adding their perfection—be conformed to the family life with its petty sufferings? —What a text for me to meditate upon already!

Ah! though I said to my heart before coming to you 'Let us go on!' I have not had a less palpitating heart in the race. I have hidden from myself neither the barrenness of the path nor the difficulties of the mountain which I have to climb. I have thought of everything during my long reveries. Do I not know that men eminent as you, know of the love which they inspire, quite as well as that which they feel, that they have more than one romance in their lives, and that you, especially, who send forth those airy poems which women buy at ridiculous cost, you are attracted more by the climax than by the opening chapters. Nevertheless, I said to my heart, 'Let us go on.' I have studied, more than you think, those grand summits of Humanity which you tell me are so cold. Have you not told me that Byron and Goethe are two giants of egotism and poetry? Ah! my friend, there you have fallen into the error into which superficial people fall; but it may be false modesty with you, generosity, or the desire to escape me. The ordinary mind may take the effects of work for the development of personality, but you cannot. Neither Lord Byron, nor Goethe, nor Walter Scott, nor any inventor belongs to himself, he is the slave of his idea. This mysterious power is more jealous than a woman; it absorbs them; it makes them live and die for its own benefit. It is true that the visible development of that hidden existence resembles egotism in its results, but who shall dare to say that the man who has sold himself for the pleasure, the instruction, or

the aggrandizement of his time is an egotist? Is a mother imbued with egotism when she sacrifices everything for her child?—Well, the detractors of genius do not see its prolific maternity, that is all. The life of the poet is such a continual sacrifice that he requires a gigantic organization to be able to give himself up to the pleasures of an everyday life. Therefore, into what troubles may he not fall when, following Molière's example, he attempts to live the life of the sentiments, expressing them entirely by their most perilous crises; for to me, remembering Molière's private life, his comedies are horrible. The generosity of genius seems to me half divine and I have placed you in that noble family of so-called egoists. Ah! if I had found there selfishness, calculation and ambition, there, where are all my best loved flowers of the heart, you do not know what long sorrow I should have suffered. I met with disappointment at the door of my sixteenth year! What would have become of me, if, at twenty years of age, I had learned that glory is a deception and that he, who in his works had expressed so many of the sentiments hidden in my heart, misunderstood that heart when it was unveiled for him alone? Oh! my friend, do you know what would have happened to me? You shall penetrate into the recesses of my soul. I should have said to my father, 'Bring me the son-in-law who will be to your taste, I relinquish my own wishes, marry me to whomsoever you please.' Had this man been a lawyer, banker, miser, fool or a provincial

as tiresome as a rainy day, common as a lower class politician, a manufacturer, or some brave soldier without an idea in his head, he would have found in me the most resigned and attentive of servants. But what a terrible suicide for every instant of one's life! My heart could never have unfolded itself in the life-giving rays of a beloved sun! Not a murmur would have revealed to my father, my mother or my children, the suicide of the creature, who at this moment is shaking the bars of her prison, darting lightning from her eyes, and flying with open wings toward you, to place herself as a Polyhymnia in the corner of your study, to breathe the air of your presence, and to look with curious eyes upon what is there. Sometimes, when in the fields where my husband might have taken me, I would have gone a little apart from my little ones and shed a few secret and bitter tears at the sight of a glorious morning; and, hidden in my heart and in a corner of my bureau drawer, perhaps I should have kept a little treasure, the comfort of poor girls abused by love, poetic souls drawn to their agony by smiles!—But I believe in you, my friend. This belief justifies the most fantastic thoughts of my secret ambition; see how far my sincerity goes, at moments, I would wish to be in the middle of the book we are beginning, so much do I feel the steadfastness of my sentiments, so much strength of heart to love, so much constancy through reason, so much heroism for the self-created duty—if love indeed can ever be called duty.

"If you could follow me into the magnificent retreat where I see ourselves happy, if you could know my projects, there would escape from you a terrible phrase in which would be the word folly, and perhaps I should be cruelly punished for having sent so much poetry to a poet. Yes, I wish to be a spring as inexhaustible as a virgin land, during the twenty years in which nature allows us to shine. I would chase away satiety by coquetry and love-making. I will be courageous for my friend, as most women are for the world. I wish to vary happiness, I would put intelligence into tenderness, piquancy into fidelity. I am ambitious to kill the rivals of the past, exorcise the outward sorrows by the lovableness of the wife, by her proud abnegation, and to take, throughout all my life, that care of the nest which birds take only for a short time. This immense dowry belongs, and should be offered, only to some great man before it falls into the degradation of common transactions. Do you now think my first letter a mistake? The wind of a mysterious will has blown me toward you, as a tempest carries a rose to the heart of a majestic willow, and in the letter which I hold here upon my heart you have written like your ancestor when he set out for the Crusades, 'God wills it.' But you will think me a chatterbox. Everyone about me says: 'Mademoiselle is very taciturn.'

"O. D'ESTE-M."

*

These letters seemed very original to the persons to whose kindness *La Comédie Humaine* is due, but their admiration for this duel with crossing pens, between two minds, while wearing the visor of the most severe incognito, may not be shared by the public. Eighty out of every hundred spectators would have wearied of this fencing match. In all countries of constitutional government, the respect due to the majority, even if it be only felt by presentiment, has led us to suppress eleven other letters exchanged between Ernest and Modeste during the month of September. If a complimentary majority should claim them, we hope they will find the means, some day, to restore them here.

Incited by a mind as aggressive as the heart seemed adorable, the truly heroic sentiments of the poor private secretary gave themselves ample scope in these letters, so that one's imagination may readily make them more beautiful than they are, as the communion of two free souls is always pleasing. Ernest lived only by these sweet morsels of paper, as a miser lives only by bank notes; while with Modeste, a deep love resulted from the pleasure of agitating a famous life and becoming, in spite of distance, its mainspring. The heart of Ernest complemented the glory of Canalis. Often, alas! we must take two men to make a perfect lover, as in

literature a type is composed only by using the peculiarities of many similar characters. How many times has a woman said, after intimate conversations in a drawing-room, "That man is the beau ideal of my soul, but I fell in love with this one, who is only the dream of my senses."

The last letter written by Modeste, which follows, allows us to see the enchanted isle whither the meanderings of this correspondence had led these two lovers.

XII

TO MONSIEUR DE CANALIS

"On Sunday be at Havre. Enter the church, and, after the one-hour mass, go around the nave once or twice and leave without speaking to anyone, without asking a question, no matter what it may be· but wear a white rose in your buttonhole. Then return to Paris where you will find a reply. This will not be what you think, for I have told you that the future is no longer mine.—But, should I not be very foolish to say 'yes' without having seen you? When I have seen you, I can say 'no' without wounding you, and I will be sure that you do not see me."

This letter had been sent the night before the day on which the useless struggle between Modeste and Dumay had taken place. Therefore, the happy

Modeste awaited, with a sickly impatience, the Sunday when her eyes would decide in favor of the right or wrong of her mind and heart,—one of the most solemn moments in the life of a girl and which three months of interchange of soul communion rendered as romantic as the most exalted maiden could wish. Every one, except her mother, had taken the torpidity of this waiting for the calmness of innocence. However powerful the family laws and religious bonds may be, there are always some Julie d'Étanges, some Clarissas, some souls filled like cups which overflow under a divine pressure. Was not Modeste grand in exerting a savage energy to repress her exuberant youth, in remaining demurely quiet? We must acknowledge that the remembrance of her sister was more powerful than all the social obstacles; she had armed her will with iron never to fail her father nor her family. But what tumultuous transports! No wonder a mother divined them.

The next day about noon, Modeste and Madame Dumay led Madame Mignon to a seat in the sunshine in the midst of the flowers. The blind woman turned her wan and faded face toward the ocean, she breathed the air of the sea and held the hand of Modeste, who was near her. The mother struggled between pardon and remonstrance ere she questioned her daughter, for she had recognized her love, and Modeste seemed to her, as to the pretended Canalis, an exception.

"Oh! that your father may return soon! If he

delay much longer he may find only you of those who love him! Promise me again, Modeste, that you will never leave him," she said, with maternal fondness.

Modeste lifted her mother's hand to her lips, kissed it gently and replied:

"Do I need to repeat it?"

"Ah! my child, I left my father to follow my husband—left him all alone too, as I was the only child.—Is that why God has so afflicted me? What I ask of you, is to marry to please your father, to keep him in your heart, not to sacrifice him to your happiness, but to cherish him in the midst of your home. Before losing my sight I wrote him my wishes, he will execute them. I advised him to keep his whole fortune intact, not that I distrust you my child, but who can be sure of a son-in-law? Was I reasonable? A glance of the eye decided my life. Beauty, that so deceitful sign, proved true to me; but should it be the same with you, my poor child, swear to me that if you are attracted by appearance as was your mother you will allow your father to inquire into the behavior, the heart and the previous life of the man you distinguish with your love—if there be such a man."

"I will never marry without the consent of my father," said Modeste.

The mother remained silent a long time after receiving this reply, and her pale, deathlike face showed that she thought deeply, weighing, after the manner of the blind, the accent of her daughter's voice.

"You see, my child, that if I am slowly dying through Caroline's mistake, your father would not survive yours—I know it, he would put a bullet through his brain—there could be no more life or happiness on earth for him—"

Modeste walked a few steps away from her mother and then returned.

"Why did you leave me?" asked Madame Mignon.

"Because you made me weep, mother," replied Modeste.

"Ah! well my little angel, kiss me. You do not love any one here, do you? you have no lover?" she asked holding her upon her lap, heart to heart.

"No, my dear mama," replied the little Jesuit.

"Can you swear it?"

"Certainly," cried Modeste.

Madame Mignon said no more, but she still doubted.

"And if you choose a husband you will consult your father," she added.

"I have promised it both to my sister and to you my mother. What indiscretion do you think I could commit while I have this ring on my finger and ever read the inscription: '*Think of Bettina*'—Poor sister!"

At these words, "*Poor sister*," uttered by Modeste, a truce of silence governed the mother and daughter. Tears flowed freely over the poor woman's cheeks and Modeste threw herself on her

knees saying: "Forgive me! oh! forgive me, mother!"

Just then the excellent Dumay was coming up from Ingouville in great haste,—a fact quite abnormal in the life of the cashier.

Three letters had brought them ruin, now, one letter brought them fortune. That very morning, Dumay had received from a sea-captain just in from the China Seas, the first news of his patron and his beloved friend.

TO MONSIEUR DUMAY, FORMERLY CASHIER OF THE HOUSE OF MIGNON

"My dear Dumay,

"I will follow the vessel which brings you this letter, as quickly as the chances of navigation will allow. I did not wish to leave my own ship, as I am so accustomed to it. I told you that no news would be good news. The first words of this letter ought to make you happy, for those words are: 'I am worth at least seven millions.' I am bringing a part of it in indigo, one-third in good London and Paris drafts, and a third in solid gold. The money you sent helped me to attain the sum I had fixed in my mind. I wished two millions for each of my daughters and a sufficiency for myself. I have been engaged in the wholesale opium trade with Canton houses ten times richer than I am. You cannot imagine in Europe what the wealth of these Chinese

merchants is. I went from Asia Minor, where I purchased opium at the lowest price, to Canton where I delivered my cargoes to the companies who deal in this commodity. My last expedition was to the Philippine Islands, where I exchanged opium for indigo of the first quality. Indeed I may have five or six thousand francs more than I estimated, as I counted my indigo at what it cost me. I have been in good health all the time, not the slightest illness. That is what comes of working for one's children. Since the second year I have been able to own *The Mignon*, a pretty little brig of seven hundred tons, built of teak, copper-sheathed and fastened, and whose interior has been made to suit me. That is an additional piece of property. The sea life, the activity necessary to business, my labors to become a long-voyage captain, have kept me in excellent health. To tell you all this is the same as telling it to my two daughters and my dear wife. I hope that the wretch who enticed my Bettina away, left her when he found that I was ruined, and that I shall find the wandering sheep returned to the Chalet. There is something additional necessary in the dot for that little one. Ah! my dear Dumay, and my three loved women, you have all been in my thoughts for the past three years. You are rich now, Dumay. Your share, outside of my fortune, amounts to five hundred and sixty thousand francs, for which I send you a check which can only be paid to you by the Mongenod house, who have been communicated with from New York. Only a few more

months, and I will see you all again and, I trust, in good health. Now, my dear Dumay, I have written to you only, because I wish you to keep the secret of my fortune and I leave it to you to prepare my loved ones for the joy of my return. I have had enough of business and I wish to leave Havre. The choice of my sons-in-law is of the utmost importance to me. My intention is to buy back the estate and the castle of La Bastie, to entail it so that it may be worth at least one hundred thousand francs a year, and to ask the king to allow one of my sons-in-law to succeed to the name and title. You will know, Dumay, what a fearful calamity overtook us through the reputation of my great wealth before—the ruin of one of my daughters. I went away to Java the most unhappy of fathers. I met there an unhappy Dutch merchant worth nine millions, whose two daughters were tempted away by villains, and we wept together, like two children; so I do not wish anyone to know about my fortune. I shall disembark at Marseilles instead of at Havre. My second mate is also a Provençal, an old servant of our family, and I have made a little fortune for him too. Castagnould will have instructions from me to buy back La Bastie, and I will sell my indigo through the Mongenod house. I will place my funds in the Bank of France and will return to you, with an acknowledged fortune in merchandise of only about a million. My daughters will be credited with having two hundred thousand francs. To choose which of my sons-in-law will be worthy to succeed to my

name, my arms, my title, and to live with us, will now be the object of my life; but both of them must be like you and me, honest, firm, loyal men and absolutely honorable. I have never doubted you, my old friend, for a single moment. I have considered that my good and excellent wife, as well as yours and yourself, have erected an impassable barrier about my daughter, and that I could with full assurance place a kiss on the pure brow of the angel who is left to me. Bettina-Caroline—if you have been able to conceal her error—shall have a fortune. After having done with war and commerce, we are going to attempt agriculture and you will be our overseer. How will that suit you? Thus, my old friend, I leave you the master of the situation with my family, to tell them of my success or to keep silent. I trust to your prudence, you must do as you judge best. In four years there are probably many changes in their characters. I fear the mother's love for her daughters, so I leave it all to you instead. Adieu! my old Dumay. Tell my wife and daughters that I have never failed to kiss them in my heart every day, morning and evening. The second check for forty thousand francs, herewith enclosed, is for my wife and children. Until we meet

"Your patron and friend,

"CHARLES MIGNON."

"Your father is coming," said Madame Mignon to her daughter.

"Why do you think so, mama?" asked Modeste.

"Nothing but that news could make Dumay run so."

Modeste, plunged in meditation, had neither seen nor heard Dumay.

"Victory!" cried the lieutenant, as he reached the threshold of the gate. "Madame, the colonel has never been sick and he is coming home—he is coming upon *The Mignon,* a fine ship belonging to him, and which with the cargo of which he tells me, ought to be worth eight or nine hundred thousand francs. But he recommends secrecy for all of us, his heart is still bruised by the misfortune of our dear little departed."

"Ah! that has to give place to the news of her death," said Madame Mignon.

"He attributes this misfortune, and I agree with him, to the greed of young men for great fortunes.—My poor colonel expects to find our strayed lamb here in our midst.—Let us be happy among ourselves, and speak to no one of it, not even to Latournelle, if possible.—Mademoiselle," he said in Modeste's ear, "write to your father and tell him of this loss, and also of the frightful consequences which this event has had on his wife, in order that he may be prepared for this terrible spectacle. I will undertake to see that he has this letter before his arrival in Havre, for he is compelled to return by way of Paris—write him a long letter, you will have time, and I will take it, without fail, to Paris on Monday."

Modeste was so afraid that Canalis and Dumay might meet, that she wished to go at once to her room to write to him postponing the rendezvous.

"Mademoiselle, tell me," said Dumay very humbly, and barring Modeste's passage, "that your father will find his daughter with no other feeling in her heart than that which she had for him and her mother, before his departure?"

"I have sworn to my sister, to my mother and to myself, to be the consolation, the happiness and the glory of my father and—*I—will be!*" replied Modeste, throwing a proud and disdainful look upon Dumay. "Do not mar the happiness which I have, in soon expecting my father in our midst, by your unjust suspicions. You cannot prevent a girl's heart from beating, do you want to make a mummy of me? My body belongs to my family, but my heart is my own. If I love anyone, my father and mother shall know it. Are you satisfied, monsieur?"

"Thank you, mademoiselle," replied Dumay, "you make me breathe again; but you might call me *Dumay,* even when you box my ears!"

"Swear to me," said her mother, "that you have not exchanged a look or word with any young man."

"I can swear to that, mother dear," said Modeste, smiling and looking at Dumay, who noticed it and smiled like a malicious young girl.

"She must be false indeed if she is deceiving you!" cried Dumay, when Modeste had gone into the house.

"My daughter may have her faults," replied the mother, "but she is incapable of lying."

"Ah! well then let us be happy in believing that trouble has closed his account with us," said the lieutenant.

"God grant it!" replied Madame Mignon. "You will see *him,* Dumay, but I shall only hear him. There is much sadness in my joy."

*

At this moment, Modeste, although happy at the return of her father, was like Perrette, bemoaning the breaking of her eggs. She had hoped for more of a fortune than Dumay had announced. Ambitious for her poet, she had hoped for at least a half of the six millions, of which she had spoken in her second letter. A prey to a double joy, and agitated by the chagrin of her comparative poverty, she went to the piano, that confidant of young girls, who tell their griefs and desires to this friend, in expressing them in the varied cadences of the music. Dumay chatted with his wife while walking under the window, confiding to her the secret of their fortune and questioning her upon her inclinations, wishes and plans.

Madame Dumay, like her husband, had no other family than the family Mignon. They decided to live in Provence, if the Comte de la Bastie went to Provence, and to leave their property to whichever of Modeste's children seemed most to need it.

"Listen to Modeste," said Madame Mignon, "only a girl in love could compose such melodies without having studied music—"

Houses may burn, fortunes may vanish, fathers return from long voyages, empires crumble, cholera ravage cities, but the love of a young girl will follow its course like nature, like that fearful acid that

chemistry has discovered, which will eat its way through the globe if nothing absorbs it at the centre.

The romance of the situation had inspired Modeste to compose music to these stanzas, which we must quote here, although they are printed in the second volume of the edition of which Dauriat spoke—for, in order to adapt them to her music the young artist had, in interrupting the pauses, made certain modifications which may astonish those familiar with the correct, and often too learned, style of this poet.

THE MAIDEN'S SONG.

Awake, my heart! Ere this the soaring lark
Thrills the air in songful greeting to the sun.
Sleep not! From violet's dewy couch and dark,
Sweet incense rises for the day begun.

One by one, refreshed, in rare glories new,
Each living flower in its pure cup reveals
Its image mirrored in a gem of dew—
A trembling pearl that the sun's ardor steals.

Soft winds tell that the Angel of Roses
Has blessed in his flight the slumb'ring flowers.
His mission divine each bud discloses
And fresh hues confess his life-giving powers.

Then rouse thee, my heart! since the soaring lark
Thrills the air in songful greeting to the sun.
Naught sleeps! From violet's dewy couch and dark,
Sweet incense rises for the day begun.


Allegretto.
PIANO.
fz
fz
Mon cœur, lè- ve-toi ! Dé - jà l'a-lou-et -
te Se- coue en chantant son aile au soleil ; Ne dors
plus, mon cœur, car la vi - o - let - te É - lève à Dieu l'en -


-ceus de son ré-veil. Chaque fleur vi - van - te et
bien re-po-sée, Ou-vrant tour à tour les yeux pour se
voir, A dans son ca - li - ce un peu de ro - sé - e, Per - le d'un
jour qui lui sert de mi-roir. On sent dans l'air pur que


l'an-ge des ro-ses A pas-sé la nuit à bé-nir les fleurs; On
voit que pour lui tou-tes sont é-clo-ses. Il vient d'en haut ra-vi-
-ver leurs cou leurs. Ain-si, lè-ve-toi, puisque l'a-louet-
-te Se-coue en chantant son aile au so-leil; Rien ne dort


plus, mon cœur! la vi - o - let - te É - lève à Dieu l'en-
- cens de son ré - veil. Rien ne dort plus, mon cœur! la vi - o -
- lette É - lève à Dieu l'en - cens de son ré - veil.
fz
fz

The art of typography permits the reproduction of Modeste's music, but the tender expression which she communicated to it, produced that charm so greatly admired in the songs of great artists, which no typography, hieroglyphic or phonetic, can render.

"That is pretty," said Madame Dumay. "Modeste is a true musician."

"She is possessed of a devil," exclaimed the cashier, into whose heart the mother's suspicion entered, making him shudder.

"She loves," repeated Madame Mignon.

Madame Mignon had succeeded, through the unquestionable testimony of this melody, in making the cashier share her certainty of Modeste's hidden love and had thus disturbed the joy which the return and success of his master caused him. The poor Breton went into Havre to return to his work at Gobenheim's; then before returning to dinner, he went to see the Latournelles to tell them his fears, and again ask their aid and assistance.

"Yes, my dear friend," said Dumay on the doorsteps, as he left the lawyer, "I am of the same opinion as madame. *She* is in love, that is certain, and the devil knows the rest! You behold me disgraced!"

"Don't be disconsolate, Dumay," said the little lawyer. "All of us, together, are surely as strong as that little person, and give them time enough and every girl in love commits some imprudence which betrays her. But we will talk about it this evening."

Thus, everyone devoted to the Mignon family was a prey to the same anxieties which had pained them the previous evening, before the experiment which the old soldier had believed would be decisive. The futility of so much effort piqued the conscience of Dumay so greatly, that he did not wish to go to Paris for his money until he had unriddled the key to this enigma. Those hearts to whom sentiments were more precious than interests, all felt, at this moment, that without the assurance of the absolute innocence of his daughter, the colonel would die of sorrow to find Bettina dead and his wife blind. The despair of poor Dumay made such an impression upon the Latournelles, that it caused them to forget the departure of Exupère, who that morning had started off for Paris. During the dinner-hour, when they were alone, Monsieur and Madame Latournelle and Butscha turned this problem on all sides, in discussing every possible supposition.

"If Modeste loved anyone at Havre, she would have trembled last evening," said Madame Latournelle. "Her lover, then, is somewhere else."

"She vowed this morning," said the lawyer, "to her mother and before Dumay, that she has exchanged neither look nor word with a living soul—"

"She loves then as I do?" said Butscha.

"And how do you love, my poor boy?" asked Madame Latournelle.

"Madame," replied the little hunchback, "I love

for myself all alone, at a distance almost as great as from here to the stars—"

"And how do you do it, you big stupid?" asked Madame Latournelle, smiling.

"Ah, madame," replied Butscha, "that which you think a hump is the case for my wings!"

"That then is the explanation of your seal!" exclaimed the lawyer.

The clerk's seal was a star under which were these words: *Fulgens, sequar,*—Shining One, I follow thee,—the device of the house of Chastillonest.

"A beautiful creature can have as much mistrust as the ugliest," said Butscha, as if he were talking to himself. "Modeste is intelligent enough to fear being loved only for her beauty."

Hunchbacks are wonderful creations entirely due, moreover, to society, for in Nature's plan, weak, deformed beings ought to perish. In these men, apparently so unfortunate, the curvature or the twisting of the vertebral column acts as a centre in which the nervous fluids are accumulated in far greater quantities than in other people, and forms a reservoir where the fluids purify themselves and work, and from whence they radiate, like a ray of light, to animate the interior nature. From them there result forces, which though sometimes discovered by magnetism, oftener lose themselves across the spaces of the spiritual world. In vain you seek a hunchback who is not gifted with some superior faculty, either of an intelligent cleverness, an entire wickedness, or a sublime goodness. Like

instruments which the hand of Art will never fully awaken, these beings, privileged without knowing it, live in themselves, as Butscha did, when they have not destroyed their forces, so magnificently concentrated, in the struggle which they have maintained, against fearful odds, to keep alive. Thus may be explained those superstitions, those popular traditions, to which we owe the gnomes, the terrifying dwarfs, the deformed fairies,—all that race of bottles, as Rabelais said, containing elixirs and rare balms. Thus Butscha almost divined Modeste. And with his curiosity of a lover without hope, of a servant always ready to die, like those soldiers who, alone and abandoned, cried out in the snows of Russia, "Long live the Emperor!" he determined, for himself alone, to detect Modeste's secret. He followed his protectors when they went to the Chalet, with a profoundly thoughtful air, for he intended to hide from all these attentive eyes, all these open ears, the snare in which he would catch the young girl. It must be a look exchanged, some surprised agitation, as when a surgeon puts his finger upon a hidden sore. That evening, Gobenheim did not come and Butscha was Monsieur Dumay's partner against Monsieur and Madame Latournelle. During the time when Modeste was absent, about nine o'clock, when she was preparing her mother's bed, Madame Mignon and her friends could speak openly. But the poor clerk, weighed down by the conviction which had taken possession of him, appeared almost as much of a

stranger to this debate as Gobenheim had the evening before.

"Well, what is the matter, Butscha?" exclaimed Madame Latournelle, astonished. "One would say that you had lost your last friend—"

Tears sprang into the eyes of the child who had been abandoned by a Swedish sailor, and whose mother had died of sorrow in the hospital.

"I have only you in the world," he replied, with a trembling voice, "and your compassion is too holy for me ever to lose it, for I will never be unworthy of your goodness."

This reply caused an equally sensitive cord to vibrate in the witnesses of this scene,—that of delicacy.

"We all love you, Monsieur Butscha," said Madame Mignon, whose voice quivered with emotion.

"I have six hundred thousand francs of my own!" said the good Dumay. "You shall be a lawyer at Havre, and the successor of Latournelle."

The American lady had taken the poor hunchback's hand and pressed it.

"You have six hundred thousand francs!" exclaimed Latournelle, who was looking in astonishment at Dumay ever since this speech had escaped him, "and you leave these ladies here!—And Modeste has no fine horse! And she has not continued to have her masters of music, of painting, and—"

"Oh! he only had them a few hours ago!" exclaimed the American lady.

"Hush!" said Madame Mignon.

During these exclamations, the august friend Butscha had posed herself and looked at him.

"My child," she said, "I believed you surrounded by so much affection that I did not think of the exact meaning of this proverbial form of speech; but you should thank me for this little fault, for it has served to prove to you what friends your fine qualties have won for you."

"Then you have had news of Monsieur Mignon?" asked the lawyer.

"He is returning," said Madame Mignon, "but let us keep the secret among us. When my husband knows that Butscha has kept us company, that he has shown the keenest and most disinterested friendship, when all the world turned its back, he will not allow you alone, Dumay, to reward him. So my friend," she said, turning her face toward Butscha, "you can immediately negotiate with Latournelle—"

"Yes, he is old enough; twenty-five and a half," said Latournelle, "and for myself, it would be to acquit myself of a debt, my boy, to facilitate you in acquiring my practice."

Butscha, who was kissing Madame Mignon's hand while bedewing it with tears, showed his moistened face as Modeste opened the parlor door.

"Who, then, has wounded my Black Dwarf?" she asked.

"Ah! Mademoiselle Modeste, do we ever weep for grief, we children cradled by misfortune? I

have just been shown so much attachment, that I feel it in the depths of my heart for all those in whom I am pleased to see relations. I will be a lawyer, I may become rich. Ah! Ah! the poor Butscha will one day be, perhaps, the rich Butscha. You do not know all the audacity which there is in this abortive child!—" he cried out.

The hunchback gave himself a violent blow of the fist against the hollow of his breast, and placed himself before the fireplace, after having thrown upon Modeste a glance which darted like a gleam of light from between his heavy, half-closed eyelids; for he saw in this unexpected incident the possibility of questioning the heart of his sovereign. Dumay thought, for an instant, that the clerk had dared to offer his addresses to Modeste, and he quickly exchanged with his friends a glance well understood by them, and which caused them to regard the little hunchback with a kind of terror mingled with curiosity.

"I also have dreams, myself!" continued Butscha, whose eyes did not leave Modeste.

The young girl lowered her eyelids by a movement, which for the clerk was already a revelation.

"You love romances. Let me in my present joy confide my secret to you, and you will tell me if the end of the romance, invented by me for my life, is possible. Otherwise, for what good is my fortune? For me, money is a happiness more than for all others, because it will be happiness for me to enrich a beloved one! You, mademoiselle, who know so

many things, tell me then, if one can make himself loved, independently of the form, beautiful or ugly, for his soul alone?"

Modeste raised her eyes to Butscha. This was a terrible interrogation, for then Modeste partook of Dumay's suspicions.

"Once rich, I will seek some beautiful, poor, young girl, someone abandoned like myself, who has suffered much, who is unfortunate; I will write to her, I will console her; I will be her good genius. She will read in my heart, in my soul; she shall have my double wealth; my gold, delicately offered, and my thoughts, adorned with all the splendor which chance at my birth refused to my grotesque person! I shall remain hidden like the cause which scientists seek. Perhaps God is not handsome.—Naturally, this girl becoming curious, will wish to see me; but I will tell her that I am a monster of ugliness; I will paint myself so ugly—"

Here, Modeste regarded Butscha steadfastly, and had she said to him, "What do you know about my love affair?"—she could not have been more explicit.

"If I have the honor to be loved for the poetry of my heart! If some day I should appear to this woman to be only a little deformed, confess that I shall be more happy than the handsomest of men, —a man of genius beloved by a creature as heavenly as you,—"

The blush which colored Modeste's face told the hunchback almost all of the young girl's secret.

M. BUTSCHA AND THE POSTMAN

"Have you a letter to-day for Mademoiselle Modeste?" he asked this humble functionary, when he saw him coming.

"No, sir, no—"

"For some time we have been good customers for the postoffice!" exclaimed the clerk.

"Ah! indeed, yes!" replied the postman.

Modeste saw and heard this little conversation.

many things, tell me then, if one can make himself loved, independently of the form, beautiful or ugly, that has soul above it."

Modeste raised her eyes to Butscha. This was a terrible interrogation, for then Modeste partook of Dumay's suspicions.

"Oh! well, I will seek some beautiful, poor, young girl, someone abandoned like myself, who has suffered much, who is unfortunate; I will write to her, I will console her; I will be her good genius. She will read in my heart, in my soul; she shall have my whole wealth, my gold, tenderly offered, and my thoughts, adorned with all the splendor which chance at my birth refused to my grotesque person! I shall remain hidden like the cause which scientists seek. Perhaps God is not handsome.—Naturally, this girl becoming curious, will wish to see me; but I will tell her that I am a monster of ugliness; I will paint myself so ugly,—"

Here, Modeste regarded Butscha steadfastly, and he blushed to the roots of his hair.

"What do you know about my love affair?"—she could not have been more explicit.

"If I have the honor to be loved for the poetry of my soul, I shall suppose that this woman is only a little deformed, confess that I shall be more happy than the handsomest of men, —a man of genius beloved by a creature as heavenly as you,—"

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"Well, to enrich her whom one loves, and to please her morally, without taking account of one's person, is not that a means to being loved? That is the dream of the poor hunchback, the dream of yesterday, for to-day your adorable mother has just given me the key to my future treasure in promising to facilitate for me the means to purchase a lawyer's practice. But before becoming a Gobenheim, it is necessary to know, first, if this terrible transformation is expedient. What do you think of it yourself, mademoiselle?"

Modeste was so surprised that she did not notice that Butscha appealed to her. The lover's snare was better arranged than that of the soldier, for the poor stupefied girl remained speechless.

"Poor Butscha!" said Madame Latournelle, in a low voice to her husband. "Is he growing foolish?"

"You wish to make real the story of *Beauty and the Beast,*" replied Modeste at last, "and you forget that the Beast changes himself into the Prince Charming."

"Do you think so?" asked the dwarf. "I myself have always imagined that this change indicated the phenomenon of the soul rendered visible, obliterating the form under its radiant light. If I am not loved, I shall remain hidden; that is all! You and yours, madame," he said to his protectress, "instead of having a dwarf at your service, will have a life and a fortune."

Butscha returned to his place, affecting the greatest calmness, and said to the three players:

"Whose deal?" But to himself, he said most sorrowfully, "she wishes to be loved for herself; she is corresponding with some deceitful great man, and how far has it gone?"

"My dear mamma, it has just struck a quarter of ten," said Modeste to her mother. Madame Mignon said good-night to her friends, and retired.

Those who desire to love in secret may have for spies, Pyrenese dogs, mothers, Dumays and Latournelles,—they are in no danger. But a lover?—That is diamond cut diamond; fire against fire; intelligence against intelligence; a perfect equation whose terms are reciprocal.

On Sunday morning, Butscha preceded his patroness, who called always to take Modeste to mass, and stationed himself at the intersection of the roads before the Chalet, to await the postman.

"Have you a letter to-day for Mademoiselle Modeste?" he asked this humble functionary, when he saw him coming.

"No, sir, no—"

"For some time we have been good customers for the postoffice!" exclaimed the clerk.

"Ah! indeed, yes!" replied the postman.

Modeste saw and heard this little conversation from her chamber, where she placed herself always at this hour behind her blind to watch for the postman. She descended, went into the little garden, where in a changed voice, she called out:

"Monsieur Butscha!"

"Here I am, mademoiselle," said the hunchback,

as he came to the little gate which Modeste opened herself.

"Will you tell me if you count among your titles to the affection of a woman, the shameful spying to which you have yielded yourself?" asked the young girl, endeavoring to confound her slave with her glance and by her queenly attitude.

"Yes, mademoiselle!" he replied, proudly. "Ah! I did not believe," he said in a low voice, "that a worm could render a service to a star!—But so it is. Would you wish that your mother, that Monsieur Dumay or that Madame Latournelle should have found you out, and not a creature, almost an outcast from life, who gives himself to you, like one of the flowers which you cut to use for a moment? They all know that you love; but I alone know how. Take me as you would a faithful dog; I will obey you; I will protect you. I will never bark, and I will not judge. I ask you only to allow me, in some way, to be useful to you. Your father has placed a Dumay in your menagerie; have a Butscha, you will tell me about it!—A poor Butscha, who asks nothing; not even a bone!"

"Well, I am going to give you a trial," said Modeste, who wished to get rid of such an intelligent guardian. "Go at once from hotel to hotel in Graville, in Havre, to ascertain if a Monsieur Arthur has arrived from England—"

"Listen, mademoiselle," said Butscha, respectfully interrupting Modeste. "I will go most willingly to walk on the beach, and that will suffice,

for you do not wish me to be at church to-day, that's all."

Modeste looked at the dwarf with an air of stupid surprise.

"Listen, mademoiselle! Although you have bound up your cheeks with cotton batting and a silk handkerchief, you have no cold,—and if you are wearing a double veil upon your hat, it is to see without being seen."

"How do you possess so much penetration?" exclaimed Modeste, blushing.

"Ah! mademoiselle, you have no corsets on! An inflammation does not oblige you to disguise your figure by wearing several skirts, hiding your hands in old gloves, and your pretty feet in hideous shoes, in dressing yourself badly, in—"

"Enough!" she said. "Now, how am I sure to be obeyed?"

"My master has to go to Sainte-Adresse. He is put out about it, but as he is usually good-natured, he did not wish to deprive me of my Sunday. Well, I will propose to go there for him—"

"Go there, and I shall have confidence in you—"

"Are you sure of not needing me in Havre?"

"No. Listen, mysterious dwarf, look," she said, pointing to the sky without a cloud. "Do you see any trace of the bird which has just flown by? Well, my deeds, pure as the air, will leave no more. Reassure Dumay; reassure the Latournelles; reassure my mother and remember that this hand," she said, showing him a fine, pretty hand, with pink

tapering fingers which were transparent, "will never be given, it will never even be touched by a kiss from anyone who may be called a lover, before my father's return."

"But why do you not wish me at church to-day?"

"You question me after what I have done you the honor to tell you, and to ask you?"

Butscha saluted her without replying a word, and ran home in raptures at having entered the service of his unrecognized mistress.

An hour later, Monsieur and Madame Latournelle came for Modeste, who complained of a terrible toothache.

"I have not had," she said, "the courage to dress myself."

"Well, do stay at home," replied the lawyer's wife.

"Oh! no. I wish to pray for my father's happy return," replied Modeste, "and I thought, if I wrapped myself up in this way, going out would do me more good than harm."

And Mademoiselle Mignon went alone by the side of Latournelle. She refused to give her arm to her escort, fearing to be questioned about the inward trembling which agitated her at the thought of soon seeing her grand poet. One look alone, the first,—was it not going to decide her future?

*

Is there in the life of man an hour more delicious than that of the first rendezvous? Are the sensations hidden in the depths of the heart, which then bloom forth, ever again repeated? Does one ever find again the nameless pleasure that one tastes in seeking, as did Ernest de la Brière, his best razors, his finest shirts, his irreproachable collars, and his most careful attire? The things associated with that hour become deified. He makes to himself alone, secret poetry which is worthy of a woman, and on the day when another guesses it, it all takes flight! Is it not like the flowers of wild fruits, bitter and fragrant at the same time, the joy of the sun, no doubt, but lost in the forest's bosom; or, as Canalis says in *The Maiden's Song,* the joy of the plant itself, whose own image the angel of the flowers has permitted it to see? This reminds us that, like many another poor creature, for whom life commenced with labor and the cares of fortune, the modest La Brière had never yet been loved. Having arrived the night before, he had gone to bed at once like a coquettish girl, in order to efface the fatigue of the journey, and he had just made a toilet, premeditated to his advantage, after having taken a bath. Here, perhaps, is the place to give his full-length portrait, if only to justify the last letter which Modeste was to write him.

Born of a good family at Toulouse, distantly allied to that of the minister who had taken him under his protection, Ernest possessed that distinguished air which an education begun in the cradle reveals, to which business habits had given a certain sedateness, but without pedantry, which is the danger of all premature gravity. Of an ordinary height, he was noticeable for a refined, gentle face, of warm coloring without being florid, and which he accentuated by a small moustache and a goatee, à la Mazarin. Without this manly certificate, perhaps he would have resembled too much a young girl in disguise, as the shape of his face and lips was so delicate, and his teeth of such transparent enamel and of such regularity, that they would have been easily attributed to a woman. Add to these feminine qualities a voice as gentle as his face was delicate, as gentle as were his blue eyes with their drooping eyelids like those of an oriental, and you will easily conceive why the minister had nicknamed his young private secretary "Mademoiselle de la Brière." The pure, full forehead, well-framed with abundant black hair, seemed that of a dreamer and did not belie the expression of the face which was thoroughly melancholy. The prominent arch of the upper eyelid, although very elegantly cut, shaded his glance and added still more to that melancholy, by a physical sadness, so to speak, which is produced by eyelids when they are much lowered over the eyes. That innate doubt which we translate by the word "modesty," animated both his

MIGNON AND A BRIER IN

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HIGNOY AND LA BRIKE [illegible]

He wore for this interview, when everything depended upon the first glance, black trousers and carefully polished boots; [illegible] held in his left hand with a gesture made [illegible] cane and his hat, thus [illegible] place demanded, his carefully arranged hair [illegible] light made as brilliant as satin.

MIGNON AND LA BRIÈRE IN CHURCH

He swore for this interview, unless everything depended upon the first glance, black trousers and carefully Polished boots; * * * he held in his left hand suith a gesture quite à la Louis XIV, a little cane and his hat, thus receeding, as the place demanded, his carefully arranged hair, suhich the light made as brilliant as satin.

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features and his person. Perhaps his appearance will be better understood, if we make the observation that the harmony of his features required more length in the oval of his head, more space between the chin, which ended abruptly, and the forehead too much shortened by the manner in which his hair grew; therefore his face seemed short. Work had already made its furrows between his eyebrows, which were a little too abundant and close together, like those of jealous persons. Although La Brière was then slender, he belonged to that sort of temperament which develops late, and unexpectedly becomes stout after thirty years of age.

For those to whom the history of France is familiar, this young man would have represented well enough the royal and incomprehensible personality of Louis XIII., with its melancholy modesty, without any known cause, pale under its crown, loving the fatigues of hunting, but hating work, timid with his mistress even to the point of keeping away from her, indifferent even to allowing his friend to be beheaded, and which can only be explained by the remorse of having avenged his father upon his mother. Was he a Catholic Hamlet, or the victim of some incurable malady? But the gnawing worm which caused Louis XIII. to grow pale and weakened his strength, was in Ernest, simple mistrust of himself; the timidity of the man to whom no woman had said, "How I love you!" and, above all, his useless devotion. After having heard the knell of a monarchy in the fall of

a ministry, this poor fellow had found, in Canalis, a rock hidden under beautiful mosses, and he sought then a power to love; and that impatience of a dog seeking a master gave him the appearance of a king who had found his own. These shadows, these sentiments, this tinge of suffering diffused over his face, made it much more beautiful than he himself believed it, angry, as he was, to hear himself classed by the women among the "melancholy beaus;" a genus out of fashion at a time in which everyone wishes to blow his own trumpet.

The distrustful Ernest had, therefore, sought all the prestige which the clothes then fashionable could give. He wore for this interview, when everything depended upon the first glance, black trousers and carefully polished boots; a sulphur-colored waistcoat, which permitted the view of a shirt of wonderful fineness, ornamented with opal studs; a black cravat, a short blue frock-coat, which seemed to be glued to his back and shoulders by some new process, and which was ornamented with a rosette. Wearing fine Florentine bronze-colored kid gloves, he held in his left hand with a gesture quite à la Louis XIV., a little cane and his hat, thus revealing, as the place demanded, his carefully arranged hair, which the light made as brilliant as satin. Stationed under the portico from the commencement of the mass, he examined the church, looking at all the religious men, but more especially at the religious women, who dipped their fingers in the holy water.

An inner voice cried out, "there he is" to Modeste, when she arrived. That coat and this make-up, essentially Parisian, that rosette, those gloves, that cane, the perfume of the hair—none of them belonged to Havre. Therefore when La Brière turned to look at the tall and proud wife of the lawyer, the little lawyer and the bundle of clothes—an expression usual among women—under which guise Modeste had put herself, the poor child, although well prepared, suffered a violent disturbance of her heart on seeing this poetical face illumined by the daylight through the doorway. She could not be deceived; a little white rose almost hid the rosette. Would Ernest recognize his unknown love dressed in an old hat and a double veil?—Modeste feared the clear-sightedness of love so much that she walked like an old woman.

"My wife," said the little Latournelle, as he walked to his place, "that gentleman is not from Havre."

"So many strangers come here!" replied the wife.

"But do strangers ever come to see our church, which is only two hundred years old?" asked the lawyer.

Ernest remained at the door throughout the mass, without having seen anyone among the women who realized his hopes. Modeste was not able to master her agitation until the close of the service. She experienced the joys which she alone could depict. At last she heard upon the flag-stones the footsteps

of a gentlemanly man, for the mass being ended, Ernest was making the rounds of the church, where there were to be seen only the especially pious, who became the object of a learned and careful analysis. Ernest noticed the excessive trembling of the prayer book in the hands of the veiled woman as she passed him, and as she was the only one who hid her face, he had his suspicions, which were confirmed by Modeste's make-up, studied as it was with the care of a curious lover. He went out when Madame Latournelle left the church; he followed her at a proper distance and saw her enter the Rue Royale with Modeste, where, according to her custom, Mademoiselle Mignon waited for vespers. After having eyed from top to bottom the house with escutcheons, Ernest asked the name of the lawyer of a passer-by, who called him with pride "Monsieur Latournelle, the first lawyer of Havre." —As he went along the Rue Royale attempting to look into the interior of the house, Modeste noticed her lover, and said that she was too ill to go to vespers and Madame Latournelle remained with her. Therefore, poor Ernest had had his journey for nothing. He dared not dawdle about Ingouville, but made it a point of honor to obey, and returned to Paris after having written, while waiting for the coach to start, a letter which Françoise Cochet was to receive the next day, post-marked Havre.

Every Sunday, Monsieur and Madame Latournelle dined at the Chalet where they went with Modeste after vespers. Therefore, as soon as the sick girl

was better, they went up to Ingouville accompanied by Butscha. Happy Modeste made a charming toilet. As she came down for dinner, she forgot her disguise of the morning, her assumed suffering and hummed:—

"Sleep not! From violet's dewy couch and dark,
Sweet incense rises for the day begun."

Butscha felt a slight thrill at Modeste's appearance, she seemed so changed; for Cupid's wings were as if attached to her shoulders. She had the appearance of a sylph, and her cheeks had the heavenly color of joy.

"By whom then are the words to which you have composed such pretty music?" asked Madame Mignon of her daughter.

"By Canalis, mama," she replied, becoming, at that instant, the loveliest crimson from her neck to her forehead.

"Canalis!" exclaimed the dwarf, to whom Modeste's accent and her blush showed him the only thing about the secret of which he was ignorant. "He, the great poet, the maker of romances?"—

"They are," she said, "only simple verses to which I have dared apply some memories of German melodies—"

"No, no," replied Madame Mignon, "that is your own music, my child!"

Modeste, feeling herself grow more and more crimson, went into the little garden, dragging Butscha with her.

"You can," she said in a low voice, "render me a great service. Dumay is very close-mouthed with my mother and me about the fortune which my father is bringing home. I wish to know what it is. Has not Dumay, since he left, sent five hundred and some thousand francs to papa? My father is not the man to absent himself for four years, only to double his capital. Now, he is returning upon his own vessel and the portion which he has given to Dumay amounts to nearly six hundred thousand francs."

"It is not worth while to question Dumay," said Butscha. "Your father had lost, as you know, four millions at the time of his departure, and without doubt he has regained them; but he ought to have given Dumay ten per cent of his profits, and from the fortune which the worthy Breton confesses to have, my patron and I suppose that that of the colonel amounts to six or seven millions—"

"Oh, my father!" said Modeste, crossing her arms upon her breast and raising her eyes to Heaven, "you will have doubly given me my life!—"

"Ah! mademoiselle," said Butscha, "you love a poet! That sort of man is more or less of a Narcissus! Will he know how to love you well? A worker of phrases, occupied in adjusting words, is very wearisome. A poet, mademoiselle, is no more the poetry than the seed is the flower."

"Butscha, I have never seen a man so handsome!"

"Beauty, mademoiselle, is a veil which serves oftentimes to hide imperfections—"

"His heart is the most angelic of Heaven!—"

"God grant that you are right," said the dwarf, folding his hands, "and that you may be happy. This man shall have, like yourself, a servant in Jean Butscha. I will no longer, then, be a lawyer. I am going to plunge into study, into the sciences—"

"And wherefore?

"Ah! mademoiselle, to educate your children, if you deign to permit me to be their tutor.—Ah! if you will allow a council!—Stop, let me do it. I can penetrate into the life and morals of this man, find out if he is good, if he is high-tempered or gentle; if he possesses the respect which you merit, if he is capable of loving absolutely, preferring you to all else, even to his talent—"

"What good will that do if I love him?" she said, archly.

"Ah! it is true," cried the hunchback.

At this moment, Madame Mignon was saying to her friends:

"This morning my daughter has seen him whom she loves."

"It must be, then, that sulphur-colored waistcoat which troubled you so much, Latournelle," exclaimed the lawyer's wife. "That young man had a pretty little white rose in his buttonhole."

"Ah!" said the mother, "the sign of recognition."

"He had the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor," said the lawyer's wife. "He is a

charming man! But we are deceiving ourselves! Modeste did not raise her veil and she was dressed like a pauper and—"

"Eh!" said the lawyer, "she said she was ill, but she has just taken off her disguise and is as well as a charm—"

"It is incomprehensible!" exclaimed Dumay.

"Ah! It is as clear now as the day!" said the lawyer.

"My child," said Madame Mignon to Modeste, who entered followed by Butscha, "did you see this morning at church a short young man, well-dressed, who wore a white rose in his buttonhole, decorated—"

"I saw him," said Butscha, quickly seeing, by every one's intense attention, that Modeste was likely to fall into a trap, "it was Grindot, the famous architect with whom the city is arranging for the restoration of the church. He has just come from Paris and I found him this morning examining the exterior when I was on my way to Sainte-Adresse."

"Ah! so he is an architect.—He puzzled me too," said Modeste whom the dwarf had given time to compose herself.

Dumay looked askance at Butscha: Modeste had regained her impenetrable composure. Dumay's distrust was now fully aroused, and he determined to go the next day to the mayor to find out if the expected architect had really showed himself in Havre. On the other hand Butscha, very uneasy

for Modeste's future, had determined to go to Paris the next day to keep watch on Canalis.

Gobenheim came to play whist and subdued by his presence all the various fermenting feelings. Modeste waited impatiently for the hour of her mother's bedtime to arrive, for she wished to write. She only wrote at night and here is the letter which her love dictated, when she thought that everyone was asleep.

TO MONSIEUR DE CANALIS

Ah! my friend, my beloved! what atrocious falsehoods your portraits in the shop-windows are! And I made that horrible lithograph my joy! I am humbled at the thought of loving so handsome a man. No, I cannot imagine that Parisian women are so stupid as not to find the man of their dreams in you. You neglected! You unloved!—I do not believe one word of what you have written of your obscure and laborious life, of your devotion to one idol, sought in vain until now. You have been too much loved, monsieur; your brow, white and smooth as the magnolia flower, tells me so and I shall be unhappy—for what am I now?—Ah! why was I born! I felt for a moment that this burden of flesh was leaving me. My soul had broken the crystal which held it captive, it coursed in my veins! The cold silence of material things had suddenly ceased for me and all nature spoke to me. The old church seemed luminous to me, its arched roofs, brilliant

with gold and azure as those of an Italian Cathedral, sparkled over my head. Beautiful melodies, such as the angels chanted to the martyrs to make them forget their sufferings, accompanied the organ! The horribly paved streets of Havre became for me a flowery way. I recognized, in the sound of the sea, the voice of an old friend full of sympathy for me, whose language I had not understood. I saw clearly how the roses in my garden and my conservatory had adored me for a long time and whispered to me of love. They all smiled upon me on my return from church and I have heard your name "Melchior" murmured by the flower-bells; I have read it inscribed on the clouds! Yes, I live, thanks to you! poet more beautiful than that cold, impassive Lord Byron whose face is as dull as the English climate. We are wedded by one of your Orient glances which pierced my black veil and sent your blood to my heart. It made me burn from head to foot! Ah! it is not thus that we feel the life which our mothers give us. A blow to you would strike me at the same moment, I exist only by your thought. I understand now the divine harmony of music, it was invented by the angels to express love. To have both genius and beauty, my Melchior, is too much! A man ought to be compelled to choose between them at birth. When I think of the treasures of tenderness and love which you have lavished upon me for the past month, I ask myself if I am dreaming. You conceal some mystery from me! What woman could resign you and live? Ah!

jealousy has entered into my heart with this love I did not foresee—Could I imagine such a conflagration? What new and inconceivable fantasy possesses me! Now, I wish that you were ugly. What follies I committed when I came home! The yellow dahlias recalled your pretty waistcoat, the white roses were my friends and I saluted them with a glance which belonged to you as does all of me! The color of the gloves which mould the hands of my noble one, the sound of his steps on the floor-tiles—all, all is so graven on my memory that sixty years hence I shall be able to recall the least thing of this day—the very color of the particles of air, the reflection of the sun which danced on a pillar—I shall hear the prayer which your step interrupted, I shall breathe the incense of the altar and feel above our heads the hands of the curate who blessed us both at the moment when you passed, giving his last benediction! That good Abbé Marcellin has already married us. The superhuman joy of experiencing this new world of unexpected emotions can only be equaled by the happiness of telling it all to you, in sending back my happiness to him who has filled my heart to overflowing with the liberality of the sun itself. Enough of veils, my well-beloved. Come! oh! come back quickly—with joy I will unmask myself.

You have no doubt heard of the Mignon house in Havre. Well I am, through an irreparable sorrow, its sole heiress. Do not scorn us, descendant of a Knight of Auvergne! the arms of Mignon de la

Bastie will not dishonor those of Canalis. We bear *gules, on a bend sable four bezants or; and to each quarter a patriarchal cross or, with a cardinal's hat as crest and the* fiocchi *for supports.* Dear, I will be faithful to our motto: *Una fides, unus Dominus—one faith, one Lord.*

Perhaps, my friend, you will find some irony in my name, after what I have done and have just avowed here. I am called Modeste. Therefore, I have not deceived you in signing O. d'Este-M. Neither have I deceived you about my fortune; it will, I believe, amount to that sum which rendered you so estimable. I know so well that fortune is an unimportant consideration for you that I speak of it without reserve. Nevertheless, allow me to tell you how happy I am to be able to give that freedom of action to our happiness which money procures. To be able to say: "Let us go!" when the fancy to see a new country takes us, to fly away, seated side by side in a fine carriage without a care of the means; in fact, happy to be able to give you the right to say to the king: "I have the fortune which you need for your peers!" Thus, Modeste Mignon can be of service to you and her gold will have the noblest destiny. As to your servant—you have seen her once, at the window *en déshabillé*—yes, your "fairest daughter of Eve the fair," was your unknown correspondent. But how little the Modeste of to-day resembles her of that day! That one was in her shroud, while this one—have I made you understand it?—has received from you the life

of life. Love pure and permissible, the love which my father, just returning from a voyage rich and prosperous, will sanction, raises me with its powerful yet childlike hand from the grave in which I slept. You have awakened me as the sun awakens the flowers. The look of your beloved is no longer the glance of your little courageous Modeste! Oh! no, it is disturbed, it has caught glimpses of happiness and veils itself under chaste eyelids. I am afraid to-day that I do not merit my good fortune. The king has shown himself in his glory, my lord has now only a subject who humbly asks pardon for the great liberties she has taken like the gambler who cheated the Chevalier de Grammont with loaded dice. Thus, my loved poet, I will be thy Mignon—a Mignon happier than Goethe's, for you will leave me in my country, will you not—in thy heart?

While I trace this vow of the affianced, a nightingale in the Vilquin park comes to answer for you. Oh! tell me quickly that his note so pure, so clear, so full, which, like an Annunciation, fills my heart with joy and love, does not deceive me!—

My father will pass through Paris, on his way from Marseilles. The Mongenod house, with whom he has been in correspondence will know his address. Go to see him, my beloved Melchior, tell him that you love me, and do not try to tell him how much I love you—Let us keep that a secret between ourselves and God. I, dearest, am about to tell everything to my mother. The daughter of the Wallenrod Tustall-Bartenstild will justify me by

her affection, she will be perfectly happy through our poem so secret, so romantic, human and divine at the same time.

You have the confession of the daughter, you must now obtain the consent of the Count de la Bastie, the father of

Your MODESTE.

P. S.—Above all do not come to Havre without having obtained my father's consent, and if you love me you will be able to find him on his way through Paris.

"What are you doing at this hour, Mademoiselle Modèste?" asked Dumay.

"Writing to my father," she replied to the old soldier, "did you not tell me that you would go to Paris to-morrow?"

Dumay had nothing more to say, so he went to bed, and Modeste began a long letter to her father.

The next day, Françoise Cochet, frightened on seeing the Havre postmark, came to the Chalet to bring the following letter to her young mistress and to take away the one which Modeste had written:

TO MADEMOISELLE O. D'ESTE-M.

My heart has told me that you were the woman so carefully veiled and disguised who sat between Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, who have only one child—a son. Ah! my loved one, if only you

are in humble circumstances, without distinction, position or even fortune, you do not know what my joy would be! You ought to know me now, why should you not tell me the truth? I am only a poet by love, by heart, by you. Oh! what power of affection is necessary to keep me here in this Hotel *Normandie* instead of going up to Ingouville which I see from my window! Do you love me as I love you? To go from Havre to Paris in this uncertainty. Am I not as much punished for loving, as I should be if I had committed a crime? I have obeyed blindly. Oh! that I may have a letter promptly, for if you have been mysterious, I have rendered mystery for mystery, and I must at last throw aside the mask, show you the poet that I am, and abdicate this borrowed glory.

This letter made Modeste very uneasy, she could not recall the one which Françoise had already put in the mail when she tried to understand the significance of the last lines by reading them again and again; she then went to her room and wrote a letter demanding an explanation.

*

During these little events, other little things were happening in Havre which made Modeste forget her uneasiness. Dumay went into the city early in the morning and promptly ascertained that no architect had arrived the previous day. Furious at Butscha's lie, which opened up complications of which he determined to know all, he hastened from the Mayor's office to Latournelle's.

"And where is your Butscha?" he demanded of his friend the notary, not seeing the head clerk in the room.

"Butscha, my dear fellow, is on his way to Paris as fast as steam can carry him. He met on the quay very early this morning a sailor who told him that his father, the Swedish sailor, is rich. It seems that Butscha's father is supposed to have gone to the Indies in the service of a Prince of the Mahrattas, and he is now in Paris—"

"Lies! infamies! farces. Oh! I will find that damned dwarf if I have to go on the express to Paris for him!" cried Dumay. "Butscha is deceiving us. He knows something about Modeste and he has not told us. If he meddles in this—he shall never be a notary, I'll give him back to his mother, to the dirt, in the—"

"See here, my friend, don't hang a man without a trial," replied Latournelle, frightened at Dumay's rage.

After having explained upon what his suspicions were founded, Dumay begged Madame Latournelle to keep Modeste company at the Chalet during his absence.

"You will find the colonel in Paris," said the notary. "In the shipping news this morning in the *Journal of Commerce* there is under the head of Marseilles—here it is, see for yourself," he said presenting the paper to Dumay: "*Bettina-Mignon*, Captain Mignon, arrived October sixth," "and today is the seventeenth; Havre already knows of the arrival of the patron—"

Dumay begged Gobenheim to make shift without him in future; he went immediately up to the Chalet and arrived there just as Modeste was sealing her two letters to her father and to Canalis. Except for the address, these two letters were exactly alike in size and envelope. Modeste thought she had placed her father's upon that of her Melchior, but had, in fact, done just the reverse. This mistake, so common in the trivial things of life, occasioned her secret to be discovered by her mother and Dumay. The lieutenant was speaking with warmth to Madame Mignon in the salon, confiding to her his new fears engendered by the duplicity of Modeste and Butscha's deception.

"Madame," said he, "he is a serpent that we have warmed in our bosoms. There is no room for a soul in those miserable little dwarfs!"—

Modeste put the letter for her father in the pocket of her apron, believing that it was the one destined

for her lover and went down with Canalis's in her hand, hearing Dumay speak of his immediate departure for Paris.

"What have you against my Mysterious Dwarf, and what are you talking so loud about?" said Modeste, showing herself at the door of the salon.

"Butscha has gone to Paris this morning, mademoiselle, and you doubtless know why—perhaps to enter into an intrigue with that so-called little architect in the sulphur-yellow waistcoat, who unluckily for the hunchback's lies, has never been here."

Modeste was taken unawares, she believed that the dwarf had gone to institute a search into the morals of Canalis; she turned pale and sat down.

"I will join him there, I will find him!" said Dumay. "That is the letter for your father, I suppose, mademoiselle," he said extending his hand, "I will send it to Mongenod, provided the colonel and I do not pass each other en route—"

Modeste handed him the letter and the little man who could read without glasses, looked mechanically at the address.

"Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, Rue de Paradis-Poissonnière, No. 29!"—cried Dumay. "What does this mean?"—

"Ah! my daughter, that is the name of the man you love!" cried Madame Mignon; "the stanzas to which you put music are by him."

"And it is his portrait which you have framed upstairs!" said Dumay.

"Give me that letter, Monsieur Dumay!—" said Modeste, who stood like a young lioness defending her young.

"There it is, mademoiselle," replied the lieutenant.

Modeste hid the letter in her bodice and held out the one intended for her father, to Dumay.

"I know what you are capable of, Dumay," she said, "but if you take one step against Monsieur Canalis, I will take one out of this house and never return."

"You are going to kill your mother, mademoiselle," replied Dumay, who went out to call his wife.

The poor mother had indeed fainted, struck to the heart by Modeste's fatal words.

"Good-bye, wife," said the Breton, kissing the little American. "Save the mother, I am going to save the daughter."

He left Modeste and Madame Dumay with Madame Mignon; in a few moments he made his preparations to depart, and went into Havre. One hour later, he was traveling by post with that rapidity which passion or speculation alone gives the wheels.

Soon restored to consciousness by Modeste's care, Madame Mignon went up to her chamber leaning upon her daughter's arm. When they were alone, she said as her only reproach:

"Unfortunate child, what have you done? Why did you hide anything from me? Am I then so cruel?—"

"Oh! naturally, I was going to tell you everything," replied the young girl, weeping.

She related all to her mother; she read her the letters and the replies; she stripped off petal by petal the rose of her poem into the heart of the good German. When the confidence, which took half of the day, had been finished, when she noticed almost a smile upon the lips of the too-indulgent blind woman, she threw herself into her arms all in tears.

"O! my mother!" she said, in the midst of her sobs, "you whose heart, all gold and all poetry, is like a chosen vessel formed by God to contain the pure, unique and heavenly love which fills all life! —You, whom I wish to imitate in loving only my husband in the world, you should understand how bitter are the tears which I am shedding at this moment and which fall on your hands.—This butterfly with variegated wings, this double and beautiful soul which I have nurtured with maternal solicitude, my love, my holy love, this living, animated mystery, is falling into vulgar hands, who are going to tear its wings and its veil under the miserable pretext of enlightening me, of learning if genius is prudent as a banker, if my Melchior is capable of hoarding his income, if he has some entanglement to be unraveled, if he is not guilty in the eyes of the bourgeois of some youthful episode, which is to our love now only as a cloud to the sun. —What are they going to do? See, there is my hand; it burns with fever. They will kill me—"

Modeste, overcome with a terrible chill, was obliged to go to bed, causing the greatest anxiety to her mother, to Madame Latournelle and to Madame Dumay, who watched her during the journey of the lieutenant to Paris, where the sequence of events takes the drama for an instant.

Those people who are really modest, as was Ernest de la Brière, but especially those who, knowing their own worth, are neither loved nor appreciated, will understand the infinite delight the secretary took in reading Modeste's letter. After having found him spiritual and grand in soul, his artless and cunning young mistress found him handsome. This, indeed, was supreme flattery. Why? Beauty without doubt is the signature of the master to a work on which he has imprinted his soul; it is the divinity which manifests itself; and to see it even where it is not, to create it by the power of an enchanted glance, is not this the highest type of love? Therefore the poor secretary exclaimed to himself with the delight of an applauded author:

"At last I am loved!"

When a woman, courtesan or young girl, has allowed this sentence to escape her, "You are handsome!" even if a falsehood, if a man opens his thick skull to the subtle poison of these words, he is forever attached by eternal bonds to this charming liar, to this woman, true or false; she becomes his world; he thirsts for this declaration, he will never be weary of it, even were he a prince.

Ernest walked proudly up and down his chamber; he placed himself at three-quarters, in profile, and at full face, before the mirror; he attempted to criticise himself, but a diabolically persuasive voice said to him: "Modeste is right!" He returned to the letter; he re-read it; he saw his heavenly blond, he talked to her! Then in the midst of his ecstasy he was struck with this atrocious thought: "She thinks I am Canalis, and she is the heiress of a million!" All his happiness fell, as a man falls who reaches in a state of somnambulism the ridge of a roof, hears a voice, steps forward, and is dashed to pieces on the sidewalk.

"Without the aureole of glory, I should be ugly!" he exclaimed. "In what a terrible position I have placed myself!"

La Brière was too much the man of his letters, he had too noble and pure a heart which he had allowed to be seen, to hesitate at the voice of honor. He decided to go at once and avow all to Modeste's father if he were in Paris, and to acquaint Canalis with the serious ending of their Parisian nonsense. For this refined young man, the enormity of her fortune was the decisive reason. Above all, he did not wish to be suspected of having made the enthusiasm of this correspondence, so sincere on his part, serve to obtain a dowry by false pretences. Tears came to his eyes as he walked from his house in the Rue Chantereine to the banker Mongenod, whose fortune, alliances and connections were in part the work of the minister, his own protector.

At the same time that La Brière consulted the head of the house of Mongenod and learned all the information which his strange position necessitated, a scene was taking place with Canalis, which the abrupt departure of the old lieutenant may have foretold.

As a true soldier of the Imperial school, Dumay, whose Breton blood had boiled during the journey, had pictured to himself a poet as a queer character without consistency, a maker of rhymes, lodged in an attic, dressed in black clothes, threadbare at every seam, whose boots occasionally are soleless, whose linen is doubtful, who blows his nose with his fingers; in short, who always has the appearance of falling from the moon, when he did not scribble, like Butscha. But the ebullition which growled in his heart and brain received something like a dash of cold water, when he entered the fine house inhabited by the poet, when he noticed in the court, a groom cleaning a carriage, when he saw in a magnificent dining-room another servant, dressed like a banker, and to whom the groom had sent him, and who replied to him, as he looked at him from head to foot, that Monsieur le Baron was not to be seen.

"Monsieur le Baron has a sitting with the Council of State to-day," he added in finishing.

"Am I then at Monsieur Canalis's house, the author of poetry?"—asked Dumay.

"Monsieur le Baron de Canalis," replied the valet, "is indeed the grand poet of whom you speak,

but he is also Master of Requests to the Council of State and attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

Dumay, who had come to box the ears of a rascal, according to his scornful expression, found a high officer of state. The salon where he waited, remarkable for its magnificence, offered to his meditations the string of decorations which sparkled upon Canalis's black coat left by the valet de chambre upon a chair. Soon his eyes were attracted by the brilliancy and workmanship of a silver-gilt cup where these words *"Given by* MADAME," struck him. Then, glancing towards a pedestal, he saw a Sèvres vase upon which was engraved *"Given by Madame the* DAUPHINE."

These silent admonitions recalled Dumay to his good sense, while the valet asked his master if he would receive a stranger, one Dumay, who had come expressly from Havre to see him.

"Who is he?" asked Canalis.

"A man well-dressed and wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honor."

Upon an assenting sign, the valet went out and returning he announced:

"Monsieur Dumay."

When he heard himself announced, when he stood before Canalis in the middle of a study as rich as elegant, his feet upon a carpet as beautiful as the finest in the Mignon house, and when he saw the studied regard of the poet, who was playing with the tassels of his sumptuous morning coat, Dumay

was so completely nonplussed that he allowed himself to be questioned by the great man.

"To what do I owe the honor of your visit, monsieur?"

"Monsieur—," said Dumay, who remained standing.

"If you wish to speak for any length of time," said Canalis, interrupting him, "pray be seated;" then Canalis dropped into his chair à la Voltaire, crossed his legs, swinging the upper one which he raised to the level of his eyes, looked at Dumay steadily, who found himself, to use a soldier's expression, utterly *bayonetted*. "I am listening to you, monsieur," said the poet, "my moments are precious; the ministry expects me—"

"Monsieur," said Dumay, "I will be brief. You have seduced, I do not know how, a young girl at Havre, beautiful and rich, the last, the only hope of two noble families, and I have come to ask you what are your intentions—"

Canalis, who for three months had been occupied with serious matters, who wished to be made Commander of the Legion of Honor, and become minister at a German Court, had absolutely forgotten the letter from Havre.

"I?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, you," repeated Dumay.

"Monsieur," replied Canalis, smiling, "I do not know any more what you are talking about than if you were talking Hebrew to me.—I seduce a young girl?—I who?—" A superb smile played upon

Canalis's lips. "Mercy, monsieur! I am not enough of a child to amuse myself stealing small wild fruit, when I have good and fine orchards where the most beautiful peaches in the world ripen. All Paris knows where my affections are placed. That there may be at Havre a young girl seized with some admiration of which I am not worthy, for the verses which I have made, my dear monsieur, that would not surprise me! Nothing more common! Here, see! Look at this beautiful ebony box inlaid with mother-of-pearl and ornamented with iron, wrought as fine as lace.—This box came from Pope Leo X. It was given to me by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, who received it from the King of Spain. I have destined it to contain all the letters I receive from all parts of Europe, from unknown women or young girls.—Oh, I have the most profound respect for these bouquets of flowers gathered direct from the soul and sent in a moment of exaltation, truly worthy of respect. Yes, for me the outburst of a heart is a noble and sublime thing!—Others, scoffers, roll up these letters to light their cigars, or give them to their wives for curl-papers; but I who am unmarried, I, monsieur, have too much delicacy not to preserve in a kind of tabernacle these offerings, so ingenuous, so disinterested. Indeed, I gather them with a sort of veneration, and at my death, I shall cause them to be burned before my eyes. So much the worse for those who find me ridiculous! What do you want! I am grateful, and these testimonies aid me to bear the criticisms

and the wearisomeness of a literary life. When I receive a shot in my back from an enemy hiding in the ambush of a paper, I look at this casket and say to myself, 'There are here and there some souls whose wounds have been healed, assuaged or dressed by me.'—"

This poetry, thrown off with the talent of a great actor, petrified the little cashier, whose eyes grew big and whose astonishment amused the poet.

"For you," said this peacock, spreading his tail, "and out of regard for a position which I appreciate, I will offer to open this casket. You may look to find your young girl there; but I know that I am right; I remember the names and you are in error that—"

"Ah! only see what becomes of a young girl in this whirlpool of Paris!" exclaimed Dumay; "the love of her parents, the joy of her friends, the hope of everybody, caressed by all, the pride of a house, and for whom six devoted persons have made a rampart of their hearts and fortunes against all misfortune!—"

After a pause Dumay continued:

"Monsieur, you are a great poet and I am only a poor soldier.—During the fifteen years that I served my country, and in the lowest ranks, I felt the breath of more than one bullet on my face. I have traversed the plains of Siberia where I remained a prisoner; the Russians threw me in a *kibitka,* as if I had been a thing. I have suffered everything; and finally, I have seen my comrades die in heaps

—but you—you have frozen the marrow in my bones, as I have never felt before!"

Dumay thought he had moved the poet, but he had only flattered him, an almost impossible thing to do, for an ambitious man no longer remembers the first phial of sweet perfume which Praise had broken upon his head.

"Ah! my brave fellow," said the poet, solemnly putting his hand upon Dumay's shoulder and finding it droll to cause a soldier of the Emperor to tremble; "this young girl is everything to you.—But what is that to the great world?—Nothing. At this moment, the greatest Mandarin in China rolls up his eyes and puts the Empire in mourning. Does that cause you great sorrow? The English are killing in the Indies thousands of men who are as good as we are, and at the moment in which I speak the most ravishing woman is being burned there; but on account of that you have none the less had your morning cup of coffee.—At this moment even, one can count in Paris many mothers of families, who are lying on straw, and who thrust a child into the world without the clothes to cover it!—Yes, see this delicious tea in a cup worth five louis, and I am writing verses at which all the Parisians exclaim: Charming! Charming! Divine! Delicious! That touches the soul! Social nature, even as nature itself, is a grand forgetter. In ten years you will marvel at your procedure! You are in a city where one dies, one marries, where people idolize each other in a meeting, where the young girl asphyxiates

herself, where the man of genius and his cargo of themes, swelling with humanitarian benefits, founder beside each other, often under the same roof, yet ignoring each other's existence! and you come to ask us to die of grief at this everyday affair. A young girl of Havre is, or is not?—Oh! but you are—"

"You call yourself a poet," cried Dumay, "but do you feel nothing of that which you depict?"

"If we felt the miseries or the joys which we sing, we should be used up in a few months like old shoes!"—said the poet smiling.—"See! You ought not to come from Havre to Paris and to Canalis, not to carry something back. Soldier!"—Canalis had the figure and the gesture of a Homeric hero,—"learn this of the poet. 'Every great sentiment is with man a poem so individual that his best friend even does not understand it. It is a treasure that is only your own, it is'—"

"Pardon me for interrupting you," said Dumay, who regarded Canalis with horror. "Have you been to Havre?"

"I passed a night and a day there in the spring of 1824 going to London."

"You are a man of honor," replied Dumay. "Can you give me your word that you do not know Mademoiselle Modeste Mignon?"—

"This is the first time that the name ever struck my ears," replied Canalis.

"Ah! then, monsieur, into what underhand intrigue am I going to put my foot?—Can I count

upon you to help me in my research?—for I am sure your name has been misused! You should have received, yesterday, a letter from Havre.—"

"I have received nothing! Be assured that I will do everything in my power to assist you, monsieur," said Canalis.

Dumay withdrew, sad at heart, believing that the hideous Butscha had put himself into the skin of the great poet in order to seduce Modeste; while on the contrary Butscha, as intelligent and delicate as a prince who revenges himself, cleverer than a spy, rummaged into the life and actions of Canalis, evading all eyes through his diminutive size, as an insect which makes its path through the sapwood of a tree.

Hardly had the Breton gone out than La Brière entered his friend's study. Naturally Canalis mentioned the visit of this man from Havre.—

"Oh!" said Ernest, "Modeste Mignon! I have come expressly on account of that adventure."

"Ah, bah!" exclaimed Canalis. "Have I then triumphed through a proxy?"

"Yes; that is the key to the drama. My friend, I am beloved by the most charming girl in the world, beautiful enough to shine among the most beautiful of Paris, with as much heart and literature as Clarissa Harlowe. She has seen me, I please her, and she believes I am the great Canalis!—This is not all. Modeste Mignon is of noble birth, and Mongenod has just told me that her father, the Count de la Bastie, is said to have something like six million

francs.—The father has arrived within three days and I have just asked an interview with him at ten o'clock, through Mongenod, who in a few words told him that it concerns the happiness of his daughter.—You understand that before seeking the father, I felt I ought to confess everything to you."

"Among those innumerable flowers open to the sun of glory," said Canalis emphatically, "there is one which is perfect, bearing like the orange trees, its golden fruit amidst the thousand perfumes of mind and of beauty united! An elegant shrub, a true tenderness, perfect happiness, and it has escaped me!"—Canalis looked at the carpet not to allow his eyes to be read. "How," he continued after a pause, in which he had regained his composure, "how could I divine through the intoxicating odors of these prettily-fashioned sheets, these phrases which mount to the head, the real heart, the young girl, the young woman with whom love takes the livery of flattery and who loves us for ourselves, who offers us real happiness?—It would require an angel or a devil, and I am only an ambitious Master of Requests.—Ah! my friend, fame makes of us an object at which a thousand arrows take aim! One of us owes his rich marriage to a hydraulic piece of poetry, and I, the more loving man, more a woman's man than he, I shall have lost mine,—for you love this poor girl?"—he said looking at La Brière.

"Oh!" said La Brière.

"Well," said the poet taking his friend's arm and

leaning on it, "be happy, Ernest! As it happens, I shall not have been ungrateful towards you! You will be richly recompensed for your devotion, for I will lend myself generously to your happiness."

Canalis was enraged, but he could not act otherwise, and then he took advantage of his misfortune by putting himself upon a pedestal. Tears moistened the young secretary's eyes; he threw himself into Canalis's arms and embraced him.

"Ah! Canalis, I did not know you at all!"

"What do you want? To make the tour of the world, takes time!" replied the poet with his emphatic irony.

"Are you thinking," said La Brière, "of this immense fortune?—"

"Will it not be well placed, my friend?" exclaimed Canalis, accompanying this effusion with a charming gesture.

"Melchior," said La Brière, "between us it is for life or death.—"

He pressed the poet's hands and left him abruptly, as he longed to see Monsieur Mignon.

*

At this moment, the Count de la Bastie was overwhelmed with the misfortune which awaited him like a prey. He had learned by his daughter's letter of the death of Bettina-Caroline, and of his wife's blindness, and Dumay had just related to him the terrible tangle of Modeste's love affair.

"Leave me alone," he said to his faithful friend.

When the lieutenant had closed the door, the unhappy father threw himself upon a sofa and remained there with his head in his hands, weeping those rare, scanty tears, which roll between the eyelids of people fifty-six years old, which moisten them without falling—which dry quickly and which revive as one of the last dews of man's autumn.

"To have cherished children, to have an adored wife, is to give one's self several hearts and offer them to the dagger!" he exclaimed, springing up like a tiger and walking up and down his room. "To be a father is to deliver one's self to misfortune, bound hand and foot. If I meet this d'Estourny I will kill him! Have daughters! One gives her hand to a blackguard, and the other, my Modeste, to whom? To a coward who abuses her under the armor of the gilded paper of a poet. Still if it were Canalis! That would be no great harm. But this Scapin of a lover!—I will strangle him with my two hands!"—he said to himself, involuntarily

making a gesture of terrible energy.—"And afterwards?"—he asked himself. "If my daughter should die of sorrow!"

Mechanically he looked from the windows of the Hotel des *Princes*, then returned and reseated himself on the divan where he remained stationary. The fatigues of six voyages to the Indies, the cares of speculation, the dangers run and avoided, and his sorrows, had silvered Charles Mignon's hair. His fine military face of pure contour, had become bronzed by the sun of the Malay Islands, of China and Asia Minor, and it had taken on an imposing character, which grief at this moment rendered sublime.

"And Mongenod, who tells me to have confidence in the young man who is coming to talk about my daughter,—"

Here Ernest de la Brière was announced by one of the servants whom the Count de la Bastie had attached to himself during the last four years, and whom he had chosen among the number of his subordinates.

"You come, monsieur, from my friend Mongenod," he said.

"Yes," replied Ernest, who timidly regarded this face as sombre as that of Othello. "My name is Ernest de la Brière, allied, monsieur, to the family of the late Prime Minister, and I was his private secretary during his ministry. Upon his fall, his Excellency placed me at the Cour des Comptes, where I am an auditor of the first class, and where I may become a Master of Accounts."

"In what manner can all this concern Mademoiselle de la Bastie?" asked Charles Mignon.

"Monsieur, I love her, and I have the unhoped-for happiness of being loved by her.—Listen to me, monsieur," said Ernest, arresting a dreadful movement of the irritated father. "I have the strangest confession to make to you, the most shameful for a man of honor; the most terrible punishment for my conduct, natural, perhaps, is not being obliged to reveal it to you.—I fear the daughter still more than the father,—"

Ernest related simply and with the nobility which sincerity gives, the opening scenes of this little domestic drama, without omitting the twenty or more letters which had been exchanged and which he had brought, nor the interview which he had just had with Canalis.

When the father had finished reading these letters, the poor lover, pale and supplicating, trembled under the fiery glances with which the Provençal looked at him.

"Monsieur," said Charles Mignon, "there is only one error in all this, but it is the chief one. My daughter has not six million francs. At the utmost she has a dowry of two hundred thousand francs, and very doubtful hopes of more."

"Ah! monsieur," said Ernest, rising as he threw himself upon Charles Mignon and pressed him in his arms, "you have removed a weight which oppressed me! Perhaps my happiness may be possible, now!—I have protectors; I will be Master of

Accounts. Had she had only ten thousand francs, if it were necessary for me to acknowledge a dowry, Mademoiselle Modeste would still be my wife, and to make her happy as you have made yours, and to be to you a true son—yes, monsieur, I have no father,—there you see the bottom of my heart."

Charles Mignon moved back three steps, fixed upon La Brière a look which penetrated into the eyes of this young man as a dagger into its sheath, and remained silent, finding the most entire candor and the purest truth depicted on this brightened countenance, in these delighted eyes.

"Has fate then grown weary of afflicting me?" he said in a low voice. "And shall I find in this fellow the pearl of sons-in-law?"

He walked around the room in an agitated manner.

"You owe, monsieur," at last said Charles Mignon, "the most entire submission to the decision which you have come here to seek, for without that you are playing a comedy."

"Oh, monsieur—"

"Listen to me," said the father, as with a glance he fastened La Brière to his place. "I will be neither severe nor hard nor unjust. You shall submit both to the inconveniences and the advantages of the false position in which you have placed yourself. My daughter believes that she loves one of the great poets of the day, whose fame, before all else, has seduced her. Well, I, her father, ought I

not to place her in a position to choose between the Celebrity who was like a beacon blaze for her, and the poor Reality which chance has thrown her by one of those jests which it so often permits itself? Must she not be able to choose between Canalis and you? I count upon your honor to be silent upon what I have just told you relative to the state of my affairs. You will come, you and your friend the Baron de Canalis, to pass the last two weeks of the month of October at Havre. My house will be open to you both, and my daughter will have the opportunity of observing you. Believe me you ought to bring your rival yourself, allowing him to believe all the nonsense that has been said about the millions of the Comte de la Bastie. To-morrow I shall be at Havre, and shall expect you three days after my arrival. Adieu, monsieur."—

Poor Ernest went back to Canalis at a slow pace. At this moment, being alone, the poet abandoned himself to the torrents of thoughts which caused the outburst of that second impulse so praised by Talleyrand. The first impulse is the voice of nature; the second is that of society.

"A girl with six millions! and my eyes did not see this gold sparkling across the shadows! With such a fortune I could be a peer of France, count, ambassador. I have replied to bourgeois girls, to fools, and to intriguing girls who desired an autograph! And I wearied of these masquerade intrigues, just on the day when God sent me a soul of the choicest, an angel with golden wings—Bah! I

am going to write a sublime poem on the affair, and this chance will come again! But how happy he is, this little simpleton, La Brière, who is strutting around in my halo!—What plagiarism! I am the model, I, and he shall be the statue! We have played the fable of Bertrand and Raton! Six millions and an angel! A Mignon de la Bastie! An aristocratic angel loving poetry and the poet.—And I, who showed the muscles of the athlete, who made the exercises of Hercules to astonish, by moral force, this champion of physical force, this brave soldier full of heart, the friend of this young girl, to whom he will say that I have a soul of brass! I play Napoléon when I should have assumed the attitude of a seraph!—Well, perhaps I shall have a friend, but I shall have paid dearly for him. But is friendship so beautiful? Six millions; that is the price of a friend! One cannot have many of them at that price!"—

La Brière entered his friend's study at this last point of exclamation. He was sad.

"Well, what is the matter?" said Canalis to him.

"The father demands that his daughter shall be in a position to choose for herself between the two Canalises."—

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed the poet smiling. "He is very clever, this father—"

"I am engaged by my honor to take you to Havre," said La Brière piteously.

"My dear boy," replied Canalis, "from the

instant it is a question of your honor, you can count upon me.—I will ask a leave of absence for a month—"

"Ah! Modeste is very beautiful!" cried out La Brière in despair, "and you will eclipse me easily! I was much astonished to see Happiness troubling itself about me, and I said to myself, 'It is mistaken?'"

"Bah! We shall see!" said Canalis with atrocious gaiety.

That evening, after dinner, Charles Mignon and his cashier flew from Paris to Havre, owing to their having paid the postilions three francs apiece. The father had entirely appeased the watchdog concerning Modeste's love affair, in relieving him of his orders and assuring him concerning Butscha.

"All is for the best, my old Dumay," said Charles, who had made inquiries of Mongenod about Canalis and La Brière. "We shall have two characters for one rôle!" he cried gaily.

Nevertheless, he recommended to his old comrade the most absolute discretion concerning the comedy which was about to be enacted at the Chalet,—the most gentle revenge, or if you will, the gentlest lesson of a father to a daughter. These two friends had a long talk from Paris to Havre, which made the colonel cognizant of the smallest incidents which had happened in the family during these four years, and Charles told Dumay that Desplein, the great surgeon, was coming, before the end of the month, to examine the cataracts of

the countess, in order to say if it would be possible to restore her sight.

A little before the breakfast hour at the Chalet, the cracking of the whip of a postilion reckoning upon a large fee, apprised the families of the return of the soldiers. A father's joy at returning after such a long absence could alone cause such enthusiasm, and the ladies, therefore, were all assembled at the small door. There are so many fathers, so many children,—perhaps more fathers than children,—who understand the intoxication of such a fête, that literature happily has no need to describe it! For the most beautiful words,—even poetry,—are inferior to these emotions. Perhaps, indeed, tender emotions are not very literary.

Not one word that could trouble the joy of the Mignon family was spoken on this day. There was a truce between the father, mother and the daughter, relative to the mysterious love which had blanched the cheek of Modeste, who had risen for the first time. The colonel, with that admirable delicacy which distinguishes the true soldier, kept all the time by his wife's side, and her hand did not leave his, while he looked at Modeste admiring her fine, elegant and poetical beauty, without tiring. Is it not by these little things that people of heart are recognized? Modeste, who feared to trouble the melancholy joy of her father and mother, came from time to time to kiss the traveler's forehead, and in kissing him so often, she seemed to desire to kiss him for both daughters.

"Oh! dear little girl, I understand you!" said the colonel, pressing Modeste's hand at a moment when she assailed him with caresses.

"Hush!" replied Modeste in his ear, pointing to her mother.

The somewhat artful silence of Dumay made Modeste anxious about the results of his trip to Paris, and she sometimes looked at the lieutenant unobserved, without being able to penetrate beyond his hard epidermis. The colonel desired, as a prudent father, to study the character of his only child, and especially to consult his wife before having a conference upon which the happiness of all the family depended.

"To-morrow, my dearest child," he said at evening, "rise early, and if the weather is fine, we will go together for a walk on the seashore.—We have to talk about your poetry, Mademoiselle de la Bastie."

This sentence, accompanied by a fatherly smile which appeared on Dumay's lips like an echo, was all that Modeste could learn. But this was enough both to calm her anxieties and to render her so curious that she could not sleep until late, so many were the suppositions she made. The next day she was dressed and ready before the colonel was.

"You know all, my dear father," she said as soon as they were on the way to the shore.

"I know all, and many things that you do not know," he replied.

At these words the father and daughter walked a few steps in silence.

"Explain to me, my child, how a girl adored by her mother, could take so weighty a step as that of writing to an unknown man, without consulting her?"

"Ah! papa, because mama would not have allowed it."

"Do you think, my girl, that that is right? If you have fatally gained information all alone, why has not your reason, or your mind, in default of modesty, told you that in acting in this manner you were throwing yourself at a man's head? Is my daughter, my sole and only child, without pride, without delicacy? Oh! Modeste, you caused your father to pass two hours in Hell at Paris, for really, morally, your conduct has been the same as Bettina's, without having the excuse of seduction. You have been a coquette in cold blood, and coquetry is the love of the head, the most fearful vice of the Frenchwoman."

"*I* without pride,"—said Modeste weeping, "but *he* has not yet seen me."—

"*He* knows your name."—

"I only gave it to *him,* when after three months of correspondence during which our souls communed, my eyes confirmed the opinion formed of him."

"Yes, my dear misguided angel, it is true that you have put a kind of reason in a folly which has compromised your happiness and that of your family.—"

"After all, papa, happiness is the absolution of my temerity," she said, with a gesture of impatience.

"Oh! your conduct was temerity, was it?"

"A temerity which my mother allowed herself," she replied quickly.

"Rebellious child! after having seen me at a ball your mother said to her father, who adored her, that she believed she could be happy with me.—Be honest, Modeste, is there any similarity between a rapidly conceived love, it is true, but one which came under the father's eye, and the foolish action of writing to an unknown man?"

"Unknown!—say, rather, father, one of our greatest poets, whose character and life are exposed to the strongest light of day, to criticism and calumny; a man clothed in fame, and for whom, my dear father, I was only a dramatic and literary character, a woman of Shakspeare, until that moment when I found out that the man was as fine as his soul was beautiful—"

"My God, my poor child, you think marriage is poetry; but if from all time daughters have been cloistered in the family; if God, if social law, has kept them under the severe yoke of paternal consentment, it was precisely to spare you the sorrows which grow out of this very poetry which charms and dazzles you so much that you are not capable of judging of its true worth. Poetry is one of the pleasures of life—but it is not all of life."

"That, papa, is a suit still pending before the tribunal of facts, for there is a constant struggle between our hearts and the family claims."

"Heaven help the child who finds her happiness in

resisting them," said the colonel gravely. "In 1813 I saw one of my comrades, the Marquis d'Aiglemont, marry his cousin, against the wishes of his father, and that household has paid dearly for the obstinacy which the girl took for love.—I tell you the family should be sovereign in marriage."

"My fiancé has told me all that," she replied. "He played the part of Orgon for some time, and he even had the courage to deny the personal superiority of poets."

"I have read your letters," said Charles Mignon, with a malicious little smile which made Modeste very uneasy, "and I must say that your last would hardly have been permissible in a seduced girl—a Julie d'Étanges! Mon Dieu! what harm novels do!—"

"If they were not written, my dear father, we would live them and it is better to read them. There are fewer adventures now than in the time of Louis XIV., and Louis XV., when there were not so many novels published.—Besides, if you have read the letters you must have seen that I have found you the most respectful son-in-law, the most angelic soul of the most scrupulous honor, and that we love each other at least as much as you and mama loved each other.—Ah! well I acknowledge that all has not happened exactly according to etiquette; I have, if you like, committed an error—"

"I have read your letters," repeated the father, interrupting his daughter, "so I know how far he has justified you, in your own eyes, for a foible

which might have been permissible in some women who understand the world and are led on by a grand passion, but which in a young girl of twenty is a monstrous wrong—"

"A monstrous wrong for common people, for the narrow-minded Gobenheims who measure by a rule, —let us keep to the artistic and poetic world, papa. —We young girls have only two ways—to let a man see that we love him by simpering and affectation or to go to him frankly—isn't the latter way grander, nobler? We French girls are handed over by our families like so much merchandise, at three months, sometimes at thirty days, like Mademoiselle Vilquin; but in England, Switzerland or Germany it is managed much as I have done—What can you say to that—Am I not half German?"

"Child!" cried the colonel, looking steadily at his daughter, "the superiority of France comes from her good sense, from the logic to which her beautiful language constrains the mind. Thus she is Reason for the whole world! England and Germany are romantic on this point of their customs, and yet their great families follow our laws of marriage. You surely do not think that your parents, who know the world, who are responsible for your soul and your happiness, should not point out to you the dangers of life!—My God," he said, "is it their fault? is it ours? Ought we to hold our children under an iron yoke? Are we to be punished for that tenderness wherewith we make them happy, which unfortunately our hearts teach them?—"

Modeste watched her father out of the corner of her eye while listening to this kind of invocation spoken with sobs.

"Is it so wrong for a girl with her heart free, to choose for her husband not only a charming man, but a man of genius, noble of family, holding a splendid position—of gentle birth—my equal?" she said.

"You love him?" asked her father.

"Listen, father," she said, leaning her head upon the colonel's heart, "if you do not wish to see me die—"

"Enough!" said the old soldier, "your passion is, I see, incurable!"

"Yes, incurable."

"Nothing can change it?"

"Nothing in the world."

"No circumstance, no treachery that you can imagine," repeated the old soldier, "you love him in spite of everything, on account of his personal charm. If he prove himself a d'Estourny will you still love him?"

"Oh! father—you do not know your daughter. Could I love a coward, a man without faith, without honor,—a gallows-bird?"

"And if he had deceived you?"

"That charming, candid boy with the melancholy look in his eyes?—you are joking, father, or you have never seen him."

"Ah! happily your love is not absolute, as you said. I have shown you circumstances which would

modify your poem.—Do you see now that fathers are good for something?"—

"You want to give your child a lesson, papa. This is becoming the *Morale en Action*—"

"Poor misguided girl!" replied the father sternly, "the lesson does not come from me. I am here for nothing, if not to soften the blow."

"Stop, father, do not play with my life,—" said Modeste turning pale.

"Come, my daughter, summon all your courage. It is you who have played with your life and now life is making sport of you."

Modeste looked at her father in stupefied astonishment.

"See now, if the young man whom you love, whom you saw in the church at Havre four days ago was a miserable—"

"But he is not!" said she, "that dark, pale face, that noble head full of poetry—"

"Was a lie!" said the colonel interrupting her. "That was no more Monsieur de Canalis than I am that fisherman putting out to sea.—"

"Do you know that you are killing me?" said Modeste.

"Reassure yourself, my child; if chance has put your punishment in the fault itself, the evil is not irreparable. The fellow you saw, with whom you exchanged your heart in this correspondence, is a loyal fellow, he came and confessed to me his embarrassment; he loves you and I do not object to him as a son-in-law."

"If he is not Canalis, who is he—?" asked Modeste in a greatly altered tone.

"The secretary—his name is Ernest de la Brière. He is not of noble birth; but he is one of those plain men of real virtue and sure morality who please parents. Besides what does it matter, you have seen him, nothing can change your heart, you chose him, you know his nature and it is as beautiful as he is handsome.—"

The Count de la Bastie's words were interrupted by a sigh from Modeste. The poor girl, pale, with eyes fixed on the sea, rigid as death, was struck as if by a pistol shot with those fatal words, "one of those plain men of real virtue and sure morality who please parents."

"Deceived!—" she said at last.

"Like your poor sister, but less gravely."

"Let us go home, father," she said, rising from the mound on which they were seated. "Hear me, papa, I swear before God to follow your will, whatever it may be, in the business of my marriage."

"Then you love him no longer?—" asked the father mockingly.

"I loved an honest man, with no lie on his face, as honorable as yourself, incapable of disguising himself as an actor and using the paint of another man's glory on his cheeks.—"

"You said that nothing could change you," said the colonel ironically.

"Oh! do not jest about it,—" she said, joining her hands and looking at her father with a dreadful

anxiety; "do you not know that you are destroying my heart and my most cherished beliefs by these jests?—"

"God forbid! I have told you the exact truth."

"You are very good, father!" she said, after a pause, with a sort of solemnity.

"And so he has kept your letters, eh? Suppose those foolish caresses of your soul had fallen into the hands of one of those poets who, according to Dumay, light their cigars with them?"

"Oh! you are going too far now."

"Canalis told him so."

"He has seen Canalis?"

"Yes," replied the colonel.

They walked along for a few moments in silence.

"Ah! that is why *this gentleman* had so much that is evil to say against poetry and poets! why did that little secretary speak of—But," she said interrupting herself, "his virtues, his qualities, his fine sentiments are only an epistolary costume.—He who steals glory and a name might well—"

"Break locks, steal money and assassinate on the public highway!—" cried Charles Mignon smiling. "That is just like you young girls with your lofty sentiments and your utter ignorance of life! A man who deceives a woman is, necessarily, a child from the gallows and ought to die on it—"

This raillery stopped Modeste's effervescence; and again silence reigned.

"My child," began the colonel, "men in society, as elsewhere in nature, must try to win women's hearts.

and you must defend yourselves. You have inverted the rôle. Is that right? Everything is false in a false position—Yours was the first wrong. No, a man is not a monster because he tries to please a woman, and our right permits to us the aggressive with all its consequences save crime and cowardice. A man may have some virtues and yet have deceived a woman, what is generally said is that he sought some treasure in her which he failed to find. While a queen, an actress or a woman placed so high above a man that she is a queen to him, can go to him herself without blame. But a young girl!—She gives the lie, then, to all that God has given her that is sacred, beautiful or noble—no matter with what grace, poetry or precaution the fault is committed."

"To seek again the master and find the servant—To have played again *The Games of Love and Chance* on my side only!" she said bitterly: "oh! I can never recover from it.—"

"Nonsense!—Monsieur Ernest de la Brière is, to my mind, fully equal to the Baron de Canalis. He has been private secretary to a prime minister and he is counsel for the Cour des Comptes; he has a good heart and he adores you; but he *does not compose verses*.—No, I admit he is not a poet; but he may have a heart full of poetry, for all that. At any rate, my poor child," he said, as Modeste made a gesture of disgust, "you shall see them both, the false and the real Canalis.—"

"Oh! papa!—"

"Did you not swear to obey me absolutely in the business of your marriage? Well, you shall choose which of the two you prefer for a husband. You commenced with a poem, you shall finish by a bucolic, and try to weigh the real characters of these gentlemen in some country excursions, hunting and fishing."

Modeste bowed her head and went back to the Chalet, listening to her father, but replying only in monosyllables.

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She had fallen from that Alpine height to which she had climbed in search of her eagle's nest, yes, fallen down deep in the mud, crushed and humiliated. To employ the poetic expression of an author of that time, "after having felt the soles of her feet too tender to tread upon the fragments of glass of Reality, Fancy, which united all of woman in that frail breast, from the violet-strewn dreams of the modest young girl to the intense passions of the woman of the world, had led her in the midst of enchanted gardens where—oh! cruel surprise—she saw, instead of this sublime flower, the hairy, crooked legs of the black mandragora spring from the earth." Modeste found herself let down from the mysterious heights of her love, to the smooth, flat way, bordered with ditches and work, in short, that route paved with the Commonplace. What child of an ardent soul would not have been bruised by such a fall? At whose feet then had she scattered her words?

The Modeste who re-entered the Chalet, no more resembled her who had gone out two hours previously, than the actress on the street resembles the heroine on the stage. She fell into a dazed trance pitiful to see. The sun was obscured, nature veiled itself, the flowers no longer spoke to her. Like all girls of strong character she drank too

deeply of the cup of disenchantment. She fought against reality and was not willing to yield her neck to the yoke of the family and society which she found heavy, hard and crushing. She did not even listen to the sympathies of her father and mother and felt a sort of savage enjoyment in letting her soul suffer its full measure.

"Poor Butscha is then right," she said one evening.

This indicates the distance she had progressed, in a short time, under the conduct of a morbid sadness, on the arid plains of the Real. Sadness engendered by the overturning of all one's hopes is a malady—often a fatal one. It would be no mean occupation for physiology to find out in what way, by what means *a thought* can produce the same disorganization as poison: how despair robs one of appetite, destroys the pylorus and changes all the physical conditions of the strongest life. Thus it was with Modeste. In three days she presented the spectacle of a morbid melancholy, she sang no more, and could not be made to smile—she frightened her parents and friends.

Charles Mignon, becoming uneasy at the non-arrival of the two friends, thought of going to seek them, but the fourth day Latournelle brought him the following intelligence:

Canalis, delighted at the prospect of so rich a marriage, determined to neglect nothing by which he might supersede La Brière without giving cause to the latter to reproach him for a violation of

friendship. The poet judged that nothing brought a lover into more discredit in the eyes of a young girl than to show him to her in a subordinate position, and he proposed in the simplest manner to La Brière that they should keep house together and take a little country house for a month at Ingouville, where they would live under the pretext of ill-health. As soon as La Brière, who, at the first moment, noticed nothing unnatural in this proposition, had consented to it, Canalis took it upon himself to pay the expenses of his friend, and he alone made the preparations for the journey. He sent his valet to Havre and advised him to ask Monsieur Latournelle about hiring a country house at Ingouville, thinking that the lawyer would prattle about it with the Mignon family. Ernest and Canalis, each thinking that he would be successful, had discussed all the circumstances of this adventure, and the talkative La Brière had given his rival a thousand items of information. The valet, thoroughly acquainted with the intentions of his master, carried them out to perfection; he trumpeted the arrival of the great poet at Havre, to whom the physicians had ordered salt-water bathing to repair his strength, which was exhausted by the double work of politics and literature. This grand personage wished a house composed of very many rooms, for he brought with him his secretary, a cook, two servants and a coachman, without counting Monsieur Germain Bonnet, his valet. The open carriage chosen by the poet and hired by the month, was

pretty enough and would serve for the drives; therefore Germain tried to find near Havre two horses suitable for riding or driving, as Monsieur le Baron and his secretary loved horseback riding. Germain in visiting the country houses, dwelt much upon the secretary before Monsieur Latournelle, and he refused two houses, objecting that Monsieur de la Brière would not be properly accommodated in them.

"Monsieur the Baron," he said, "has made his secretary his best friend. Ah! I should be well scolded if Monsieur de la Brière was not as well treated as Monsieur the Baron himself! And after all, Monsieur de la Brière is auditor at the Cour des Comptes."

Germain was never seen except clothed all in black, his hands well gloved, well booted, and dressed like a master. Judge what an effect he produced and what an idea one gained of the poet from this sample! The valet of a man of intellect ends by having intellect, for the mind of the master ends by impressing itself upon the servant. Germain did not overdo his rôle; he was simple, he was kindly, according to Canalis's advice. Poor La Brière did not suspect the harm which Germain was doing to him, nor the depreciation to which he had consented, for from these lower classes of society there mounted to Modeste some fragments of the public rumor. Therefore Canalis was going to take his friend in his retinue, in his carriage, and Ernest's character did not allow him to recognize

the falseness of his position in time to remedy it. The delay which fretted Charles Mignon, arose from Canalis having his coat of arms painted upon the panels of his carriage, and from his orders to his tailor, for the poet availed himself of the great number of these details, the least of which may influence a young girl.

"Be contented," said Latournelle to Charles Mignon on the fifth day. "Monsieur Canalis's valet has concluded a bargain this morning; he has hired, all furnished, the pavilion of Madame Amaury at Sanvic, for seven hundred francs, and he has written to his master that he may start and that he will find everything in readiness upon his arrival. Therefore, these gentlemen will be here on Sunday. I have even received the following letter from Butscha.—See, it is not long: 'My dear master. I cannot return before Sunday. I have, between this and then, to learn some very important information concerning the happiness of a person in whom you interest yourself.'"

The announcement of the arrival of these two personages did not make Modeste less sad; the idea of her fall and her confusion still dominated her, for she was not the coquette that her father believed. There is a charming coquetry which is permissible: that of the soul, and which may be called the politeness of love; but Charles Mignon, in scolding his daughter, had not distinguished between the desire to please, and the love of the head,—between the thirst of loving, and that of calculation. As a true

colonel of the Empire, he had seen in this correspondence rapidly read, a daughter who had thrown herself at a poet's head; but in the letters which have been suppressed to shorten the story, a connoisseur would have admired the modest and gracious reserve which Modeste had promptly substituted for the aggressive and light tone of her first letters, by a transition natural enough for a woman. Her father had been cruelly right upon one point. Modeste's last letter, impressed with an intense love, had spoken as if the marriage were already arranged; this letter caused her shame; therefore she found her father very hard, very cruel, to force her to receive a man unworthy of her, towards whom her untrammeled soul had flown. She had questioned Dumay about his interview with the poet; ingeniously she had made him tell her its smallest details; and she did not find Canalis as barbarous as the lieutenant had. She smiled at that lovely papal casket which held the letters from the thousand and one admirers of this literary *Don Juan*. She was several times tempted to say to her father: "I am not the only woman who wrote to him; the best of women send leaves for the poet's laurel wreath!"

During this week, Modeste's character underwent a transformation. This catastrophe,—and it was a great one in a nature so poetical,—awakened the clear-sightedness, the malice latent in this young girl, in whom the aspirants for her hand were going to encounter a terrible adversary. In short, when

the heart of a woman grows cold, her reason becomes sound; then she observes everything with a certain rapidity of judgment, with a tone of pleasantry which Shakspeare has depicted so admirably in the person of Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Modeste was seized with a profound disgust for men, of whom the most distinguished deceived her hopes. That which a woman takes for disgust, in love, is simply seeing justly; but in the matter of sentiment she is never—especially if a young girl—able to see clearly. If she does not admire, she despises. Now, after having submitted to the most unheard-of sorrows, Modeste naturally buckled on this armor upon which she had once said was engraved the word DISDAIN. Henceforth, she could assist as a disinterested person at what she called the farce of lovers, although she was to enact the rôle of the leading lady in it. She proposed, above all else, constantly to humiliate Monsieur de la Brière.

"Modeste is saved," said Madame Mignon to her husband, smilingly. "She wishes to avenge herself upon the false Canalis by trying to love the real one."

Such was indeed Modeste's plan. It was so vulgar that her mother to whom she confided her chagrin, advised her to show only the most overwhelming goodness to Monsieur de la Brière.

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"Here are two fellows," said Madame Latournelle on Saturday evening, "who do not suspect the number of spies whom they will have at their heels, for there are eight of us to unmask them."

"What's that you say? Two, my dear?" exclaimed the little Latournelle. "There are three of them. Gobenheim has not come yet. I can speak out."

Modeste raised her head, and everyone else, imitating Modeste, looked at the lawyer.

"A third lover, and he is one, puts himself in the ranks—"

"Ah, bah!—" said Charles Mignon.

"But it is a question of no less a person," replied the lawyer pompously, "than that of His Lordship, Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, Marquis of Saint-Sever, Duc de Nivron, Comte de Bayeux, Viscomte d'Essigny, Grand Equerry of France and a peer, Chevalier of the orders of the Spur and of the Golden Fleece, a Grandee of Spain and the son of the last Governor of Normandy. He saw Mademoiselle Modeste during his visit to the Vilquins, and he regretted then, said his lawyer who came from Bayeux yesterday, that she was not rich enough for him, for his father, upon his return to France, had secured only his château of Hérouville, and that saddled with a sister. The young duke

is thirty-three years old. I am positively ordered to make you proposals, Monsieur le Comte," said the lawyer as he turned respectfully towards the count.

"Ask Modeste," replied the father, "if she wishes still another bird in her aviary, for as far as I am concerned, I consent to this Grand Equerry paying his attentions to her."

Notwithstanding the care which Charles Mignon took to see no one, to remain at the Chalet and not to go out without Modeste, Gobenheim, whom it would have been difficult to receive no longer at the Chalet, had talked of Dumay's fortune, for Dumay, this second father to Modeste, had said to Gobenheim in leaving him:

"I shall be my colonel's steward, and all my fortune, outside of that which my wife will keep of it, will be for the children of my little Modeste."

Everyone at Havre had then asked this very simple question, as Latournelle had already done:

"Must not Charles Mignon have a colossal fortune, that Dumay's portion is six hundred thousand francs, and for Dumay to be his steward?"

"Monsieur Mignon came on his own ship laden with indigo," was said on Change. "This cargo is already worth more, without counting the ship, than he says his fortune amounts to."

The colonel did not wish to send away his servants, chosen with so much care during his journeys, and he was obliged to hire a house for six months out of Ingouville, for he had a valet, a cook

and coachman, both negroes, a mulatto woman and two mulattoes upon whose fidelity he could depend. The coachman sought for saddle horses for mademoiselle and for his master, and horses for the carriage in which the colonel and lieutenant had returned. This carriage, bought in Paris, was the latest fashion, and bore the coat of arms of La Bastie surmounted with a count's coronet. These things, most trivial to the eyes of a man who during four years had lived in the midst of the unrestrained luxury of the Indies, of the merchants of Hong Kong and of the English at Canton, were commented upon by the merchants and people of Havre, Graville and Ingouville. In five days a startling rumor had been spread, which in Normandy had the effect of a powder train when it takes fire.

"Monsieur Mignon has returned from China with millions," they said at Rouen, "and it appears that he became a count on his travels."

"But he was the Comte de la Bastie before the Revolution," replied a questioner.

"How? Is a liberal, who for twenty-five years was called Charles Mignon, to be called *Monsieur le Comte ?*—To what are we coming?"

Modeste was then considered, in spite of the silence of her parents and friends, to be the richest heiress of Normandy, and all eyes, therefore, remarked her charms. The aunt and the sister of the Duc d'Hérouville confirmed at Bayeux in a full drawing-room, the right of Monsieur Charles Mignon

to the title and coat of arms of the count, due to Cardinal Mignon, whose hat and tassel were adopted through gratitude as a crest and supporters. They had caught a glimpse of Mademoiselle de la Bastie from the Vilquins, and their solicitude for the head of their impoverished house had immediately awakened.

"If Mademoiselle de la Bastie is as rich as she is handsome," said the young duke's aunt, "she would be the finest match in the province; and she belongs to the nobility, at least."

This last phrase was said against the Vilquins, with whom they had not been able to come to any understanding, after having had the humiliation of visiting them.

Such are the insignificant events which are to introduce one more personage into this domestic scene, contrary to the laws of Aristotle and Horace; but the portrait and biography of this personage, arriving on the scene so late, will not take much time, judged by its diminutiveness. Monsieur le Duc will occupy as little place here as he holds in history. His Lordship, Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, the fruit of a late marriage of the last Governor of Normandy, was born at Vienna during a time of emigration in 1796. Having returned with the king in 1814, the aged marshal, the father of the present duke, died in 1819 without having been able to marry his son, although he was the Duc de Nivron. He left him only the immense Château of Hérouville, the park, some dependencies and a farm which was

redeemed at great pains; in all an income of fifteen thousand francs. Louis XVIII. conferred the office of Grand Equerry on the son, who, under Charles X., had the pension of twelve thousand francs, granted to the poor peers of France. But what was the salary of a Grand Equerry and an income of tweny-seven thousand francs for this family? In Paris, it is true, the young duke had the use of the king's carriages, his hotel in the Rue Saint-Thomas du Louvre,—a perquisite of the Grand Equerry,—but his salary just paid the expenses of his winter and the twenty-seven thousand francs his summer expenses in Normandy. If this great personage still remained unmarried, it was less his fault than that of his aunt, who was not versed in La Fontaine's fables. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville had enormous pretensions, not in accord with the spirit of the age, for those with great names and little money could hardly find rich heiresses in the highest French nobility, who were already much embarrassed to provide for their ruined sons through the equal division of property. To marry the young Duc d'Hérouville advantageously, it would have been necessary to have fawned upon the great banking houses, and, instead, the haughty daughter of the d'Hérouvilles wounded them all with cutting speeches. During the first years of the Restoration, from 1817 to 1825, although seeking for millions, Mademoiselle d'Hérouville refused Mademoiselle Mongenod, daughter of the banker,—whom Monsieur de Fontaine was pleased to accept.

At last, after several fine opportunities lost through her fault, she found now that the fortune of the Nucingens was too basely gained to lend herself to the ambition of Madame de Nucingen, who wished to make her daughter a duchess. The king in his desire to restore the d'Hérouvilles to their former splendor, had almost arranged this marriage, and he publicly reproached Mademoiselle d'Hérouville with foolishness. Thus the aunt made her nephew ridiculous, and the duke lent himself to the ridicule. In short, when great human things dwindle away, they leave behind them crumbs, *frusteaux,* as Rabelais would say, and the French nobility show us too many such remnants in this century. Certainly, neither the clergy nor the nobility have a right to complain in that long history of manners and customs. The two great and magnificent social necessities have been represented in it; but would it not be well to renounce the fine title of historian if one were not impartial, if one did not show here the degeneration of the race, as you will find elsewhere in the figure of the refugee in the Count of Mortsauf,—see *The Lily of the Valley*, —and the flower of the nobility in the Marquis d'Espard,—see *l'Interdiction*. How did the race of the strong and the valorous men of the proud house of Hérouville, which gave the famous marshal to royalty, cardinals to the church, captains to the Valois, doughty knights to Louis XIV.,—how did it end in such a frail being, smaller even than Butscha? That is a question which is asked in many

drawing-rooms in Paris, when one hears announced more than one great name of France, and sees enter a little, spare, puny man, who is scarcely able to breathe; or some premature old man; or some odd creation in whom the observer seeks in vain a trace by which the imagination can discover the signs of former grandeur. The dissipations of the reign of Louis XV., the orgies of this selfish and fatal time, have produced this exhausted generation, in which the manners alone survive great vanished qualities, —forms which are, indeed, the only heritage that the nobles preserve. Therefore the abandonment in which Louis XVI. was allowed to perish may be explained, with some exceptions, as the result of the wretched reign of Madame de Pompadour.

Blond, pale and thin, with blue eyes, the Grand Equerry was not wanting in a certain dignity of thought; but his small stature and the mistakes of his aunt, who had induced him to waste his addresses in vain on a Vilquin, gave him excessive timidity. Already the d'Hérouville family had almost perished through the fact of an abortion.—See *The Cursed Child.* PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES—The Great Marshal—for so they called the man whom Louis XIII. had created a duke—had married at eighty-two years of age and naturally the family had continued. Although the young duke loved women, he placed them too high; he admired them too much; he adored them, and he was at his ease only with those whom he could not respect. This characteristic had caused him to lead

a life that in some respects was double. He took his revenge with the courtesans for the adorations to which he gave himself up in the salons,—or, if you will, in the boudoirs of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. These manners and his small stature, his sickly face and his blue eyes upturned ecstatically, had added very unjustly to the ridicule made about his person, for he was full of delicacy and intelligence; but his wit, which lacked sparkle, manifested itself only when he felt himself at ease. Thus Fanny Beaupré, the actress who, it was said, was his best friend,—at the price of gold,—said of him:

"It is good wine, but so well corked that one breaks her corkscrews in opening the bottle."

The beautiful Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, whom the Grand Equerry could only adore, overwhelmed him with a saying which like all good slanderous things, was unfortunately repeated:

"He gives me the idea," she said, "of a jewel beautifully cut, which one exhibits far oftener than one wears, and which remains in the jeweler's cotton."

There was nothing even to the name of the office of the Grand Equerry, which did not make the good Charles X. laugh, although the Duc d'Hérouville was an excellent rider, which justified the appointment. Men are like books; they are sometimes appreciated too late. Modeste had caught a glimpse of the Duc d'Hérouville during the unfruitful stay which he had made at the Vilquins, and as she had

seen him pass, all these reflections had come to her mind, almost involuntarily. But, in the circumstances in which she found herself, she well understood that the addresses of the Duc d'Hérouville were important to her, so as not to be at the mercy of any Canalis.

"I do not see why," she said to Latournelle, "the Duc d'Hérouville should not be admitted. I pass, notwithstanding our indigence," she continued, looking at her father mischievously, "for an heiress. Therefore I will finish by publishing a bulletin.—Have you not noticed how Gobenheim's glances have changed since a week ago? He is disconsolate at not being able to place his whist parties to the score of a mute adoration for my charms."

"Hush, my sweetheart," said Madame Latournelle. "Here he is!"

"Father Althor is in despair," said Gobenheim to Monsieur Mignon as he entered.

"Why?" asked the Comte de la Bastie.

"Vilquin," he said, "is going to fail, and on the Exchange you are believed to be worth several millions—"

"No one knows," replied Charles Mignon, sharply, "what my liabilities are in India, and I do not care to take the public into my confidence about my affairs. Dumay," he said in his friend's ear, "if Vilquin is embarrassed, we could return to my country house, by giving him the price in ready cash which he paid for it."

Such was the condition of things, due to chance,

in the midst of which Canalis and La Brière arrived, with a courier in advance, on Sunday morning at Madame Amaury's pavilion. It was learned that the Duc d'Hérouville, his sister and his aunt, were to arrive on Tuesday, under pretext of ill-health, at a hired house at Graville. This competition caused it to be said on Change that, thanks to Mademoiselle Mignon, rents at Ingouville were going to rise.

"She will make a hospital of the place, if this continues," said the younger Mademoiselle Vilquin, in despair at not being a duchess.

The everlasting comedy of *The Heiress,* which was to be enacted at the Chalet, would surely, in the situation in which Modeste found herself, and after her pleasantry, be named *The Program of a Young Girl,* for she had positively decided, after losing her illusions, to give her hand only to the man whose qualities satisfied her entirely.

The day following their arrival, the two rivals, still intimate friends, made their preparations to appear at the Chalet in the evening. They had devoted all of Sunday and Monday morning to their unpacking; to taking possession of Madame Amaury's pavilion, and to those arrangements which a month's sojourn necessitated. Moreover, authorized by his position of a minister's apprentice to allow himself many of the actions of a roué, the poet calculated everything; he desired to profit by the probable noise which his arrival at Havre would make, some echoes of which would reach the

Chalet. In his character of a man needing rest, Canalis did not go out. La Brière went to walk twice before the Chalet, for he loved with a kind of despair, and having a profound terror of having displeased Modeste, his future seemed to him to be covered with thick clouds. The two friends came down to dinner on Monday, both dressed for their first visit,—the most important of all. La Brière was dressed as he had been on that famous Sunday at church; but he thought of himself as the satellite of a planet, and abandoned himself to the chances of his situation. Canalis had omitted neither his black coat, his decorations, nor that elegance of the salon which had been brought to perfection by his intercourse with the Duchesse de Chaulieu, his protectress, and with the best society of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Canalis had observed every detail of dandyism; while poor La Brière was going to show himself in all the negligence of a man without hope.

In serving his two masters at table, Germain could not help smiling at this contrast. At the second course, he entered with a very diplomatic, or to express it better, an anxious air.

"Does Monsieur le Baron know," he said to Canalis in a low tone, "that the Grand Equerry comes to Graville to cure himself of the same malady which has attacked Monsieur de la Brière and Monsieur le Baron?"

"The little Duc d'Hérouville?" exclaimed Canalis.

"Yes, monsieur."

"He comes for Mademoiselle de la Bastie?" asked La Brière, blushing.

"For Mademoiselle Mignon!" replied Germain.

"We are tricked!" exclaimed Canalis, looking at La Brière.

"Ah!" replied Ernest quickly, "that is the first time since our departure that you have said *we*. Until now it has been *I!*"

"You understand me," replied Melchior, bursting into a peal of laughter. "But we are not in a state to fight against one of the great offices of the crown, against the title of duke and peer, nor against the swamp which the Council of State has just conferred, upon my report, on the house of Hérouville."

"His lordship," said La Brière, with a maliciousness full of seriousness, "will offer you a bit of consolation in the person of his sister."

At this moment, Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie was announced. The two young men arose upon hearing it, and La Brière went quickly toward him in order to present Canalis to him.

"I wish to return the visit which you made me at Paris," said Charles Mignon to the young secretary, "and I knew that in coming here I should have the double pleasure of seeing one of the great poets of our day."

"Great, monsieur?" replied the poet smiling; "there can be nothing great in a century to which the reign of Napoléon served as a preface. In the first place, we are a horde of self-styled great poets!

—Then secondary talents play at genius so well that they have rendered all great fame impossible."

"Is it for that reason that you throw yourself into politics?" asked the Comte de la Bastie.

"It is the same in that sphere," said the poet. "There are no longer great statesmen; there are only men who meddle more or less with events. Look, monsieur, under the government which the Charter has given us, which makes more of the taxes than of a coat of arms, that alone is solid which you went to seek in China,—a fortune."

Satisfied with himself and contented with the impression which he had made upon his future father-in-law, Melchior turned toward Germain.

"Serve the coffee in the salon," he said as he invited the merchant to leave the dining-room.

"I thank you, Monsieur le Comte," then said La Brière, "for thus saving me the embarrassment which I should have felt in introducing my friend at your home. You have mind as well as a great heart."

"Bah! The mind of all men of Provence," said Charles Mignon.

"Ah, you are from Provence?" exclaimed Canalis.

"Pardon my friend," said La Brière; "he has not, like myself, studied the history of the La Basties."

At the word *friend,* Canalis cast a searching look upon Ernest.

"If your health will permit," said the Provençal

to the grea poet, "I claim the honor of receiving you this evening under my roof, and it will be a day to mark, as the ancient says, *albo notanda lapillo*. Although we may be somewhat embarrassed to receive so great a glory in so small a house, you will satisfy the impatience of my daughter, whose admiration for you goes so far even as to set your verses to music."

"You have more than glory," said Canalis. "You possess beauty there, if I may believe Ernest."

"Oh! a good girl whom you will find very provincial," said Charles.

"A provincial girl sought in marriage by the Duc d'Hérouville, it is said!" exclaimed Canalis dryly.

"Oh!" replied Monsieur Mignon with the perfidious good nature of a Southerner, "I leave my daughter free. Dukes, princes, ordinary individuals,—all are the same to me; even a man of genius. I will enter into no engagement, and the man whom Modeste will choose shall be my son-in-law,—or rather, my son," he said, looking at La Brière. "What can I do? Madame de la Bastie is a German and she does not believe in our etiquette, and I allow myself to be led by my two women. I have always preferred to be in the carriage than upon the box. We can talk of these serious things with a laugh, for we have not yet seen the Duc d'Hérouville, and I believe no more in the marriages made by proxy than in the lovers arranged by parents."

"That is a declaration as desperate as encouraging for two young men who desire to find the philosopher's stone of happiness in marriage," said Canalis.

"Do you not believe it is useful, necessary and politic to stipulate the perfect liberty of the parents, the girl and her wooers?" asked Charles Mignon.

Canalis, at a look from La Brière, was silent, and the conversation became trivial, and after several turns in the garden the father withdrew, calculating upon the visit of the two friends.

"That is our dismissal!" exclaimed Canalis. "You understood it as well as I did. Besides, were I in his place, I would not hesitate between the Grand Equerry and us, however charming we may be."

"I do not think so," replied La Brière. "I believe this brave soldier came to satisfy his impatience to see you and to declare his neutrality to us, even in opening his house to us. Modeste, captivated by your glory and deceived in my personality, simply finds herself between poetry and reality. I have the misfortune to be the reality."

"Germain," said Canalis to his valet, who came in to take away the coffee cups, "have the horses harnessed. We will start in a half-hour and take a drive before going to the Chalet."

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The two young men were equally impatient to see Modeste, but La Brière dreaded the interview and Canalis went to it with a confidence full of self-conceit. Ernest's warmth toward the father, and the flattery with which he had just fawned upon the aristocratic pride of the merchant in making Canalis's maladresse noticeable, determined the poet to play a part. Melchior resolved, while he displayed his seductions, to play indifference, to appear to disdain Modeste, and thus pique the young girl's self-love. A pupil of the beautiful Duchesse de Chaulieu, he showed himself in this part worthy of the reputation he enjoyed of knowing women well, although he did not understand them, as often happens to those who are the happy victims of an exclusive passion. While poor Ernest, sunk in his corner of the carriage, kept a sad silence, overwhelmed by the terrors of true love, and foreseeing the anger, the disdain and contempt, all the thunderbolts of a young girl who has been wounded and offended, Canalis was preparing himself, not less silently, like an actor ready to play an important rôle in some new piece. Certainly neither of them resembled happy men. For Canalis, also, weighty interests were at stake. For him, the mere desire of marriage would involve the rupture of the serious friendship which had bound him for almost ten

years to the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Although he had given as a reason for his journey the pretext of his fatigue,—which women never believe even when it is true,—his conscience tormented him slightly; but the word conscience appeared so jesuitical to La Brière that he shrugged his shoulders when the poet made him the confidant of his scruples.

"Your conscience, my friend, seems to me simply the fear of losing the pleasures of vanity, of very real advantages and of a habit, in losing the affection of Madame de Chaulieu; for if you succeed with Modeste, you will renounce with regret the insipid aftermath of a passion very much harvested for the past eight years. If you say that you tremble at displeasing your protectress, if she should learn the reason of your stay here, I shall believe you. To renounce the duchess and not to succeed at the Chalet, will be to play too high. You take the effect of this alternative for remorse."

"You do not understand the sentiments at all," said Canalis, impatient as a man to whom one tells the truth when he asks for a compliment.

"That is the reply of a bigamist to a dozen jurors," replied La Brière smiling.

This epigram made another disagreeable impression upon Canalis; he found La Brière too intelligent and free for a secretary.

The arrival of a splendid carriage, driven by a coachman in the Canalis livery, made the greater sensation at the Chalet inasmuch as they expected

the two suitors there, and as all the personages of this story, except the duke and Butscha, were there.

"Which is the poet?" asked Madame Latournelle of Dumay, from the recess of the window, where she had just posted herself at the noise of the carriage.

"The one who walks like a drum-major," replied the cashier.

"Ah!" replied the lawyer's wife, examining Melchior, who swung himself like a man who is aware of being looked at.

Although too severe, Dumay's estimate, simple man as he always was, had some justice in it. Through the fault of the great lady who flattered him excessively and spoiled him, as all women older than their adorers always flatter and spoil them, Canalis was morally a sort of Narcissus. A woman of a certain age who wishes to attach a man to her forever, commences by deifying his faults, in order to render all rivalship impossible; for a rival is not, at first approach, in the secret of that superfine flattery to which the man has become accustomed. Fops are the product of this feminine work, when they are not fops from birth. Canalis, captivated at an early age by the beautiful Duchesse de Chaulieu, thus justified to himself his affectations, saying that they pleased this woman whose taste was law. Although these differences are of an excessive delicacy, it is not impossible to point them out. Thus, Melchior possessed a talent for reading aloud, which had been so much admired that the

overpraise had led him into a line of exaggeration in which neither the poet nor the actor come to a standstill and which caused it to be said of him—always by de Marsay—that he did not declaim, but that he rang out his verses, so greatly did he prolong the sounds in listening to himself.

In the slang of the green-room Canalis "took his time rather long." He allowed himself to exchange glances with his audience, assuming poses and tnose resources of the play called by actors *balançoires*—an expression which is picturesque like everything created by these artistic people. Canalis, besides, was the head of a school and had his imitators. This chanting emphasis had slightly affected his conversation, he had a declamatory tone as we have seen in his interview with Dumay. The moment the mind becomes abnormally capricious, the manner follows suit. Thus Canalis ended by studying his walk, inventing attitudes, looking at himself in the mirror on the sly and making his discourse accord with his pose. He was so much occupied in producing an effect that a famous joker, Blondet, had more than once bet that he could disconcert the poet by looking fixedly at his frizzed hair, or his boots, or the tail of his coat—and had won the bet. After ten years, these airs and graces, which had commenced by having a flowery youth as an excuse, had become all the more objectionable because Melchior himself was getting on in life. A fashionable, pleasure-fed life is as fatiguing to men as to women, and perhaps the twenty years, by which the

duchess was the senior of Canalis, weighed upon him more than her, for to the world she was always beautiful—having no wrinkles, no rouge, and no heart. Alas! that neither men nor women have friends to warn them when the perfume of their modesty loses its fragrance, when the tenderness in their eyes is but a tradition of the theatre, or the expression of their faces changes to affectation, and when the artifices of their minds allow the adscititious ruddy tints of their bodies to be visible. Genius alone can renew itself like the serpent, and in the matter of charm, like everything else, it is the heart alone which does not age. People of heart are most simple. Now, as you know, Canalis had a dried-up heart. He had abused the beauty of his glance by affecting unreasonably that fixity of expression which meditation gives to the eyes. Indeed, for him, applause was a commerce by which he wished to profit largely. His manner of complimenting, charming to superficial people, was insulting to persons of more delicacy, owing to its grossness and directness of flattery which was, but too evidently, a studied effort. In fact Melchior lied like a courtier. He had said, without blushing, to the Duc de Chaulieu, who had made little or no impression on the deputies, when, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he had been obliged to address them from the tribune:

"Your excellency was sublime."

How many men have been, like Canalis, cured of their affectations by non-success administered in

small doses! These defects, light enough in the gilded salons of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where each one brings with exactitude his quota of nonsense, and where this kind of boasting, preparation, of tension—if you like—is supported by a background of excessive luxury and sumptuous toilettes, which perhaps excuse it, became extravagantly marked in the heart of the country, where the absurdities belong to a different order. Canalis, at all times overstrained and full of mannerisms, could not change himself, he had had time to cool in the mould to which the duchess had cast him; moreover, he was thoroughly Parisian or, if you please, thoroughly French. The Parisian is amazed that nothing elsewhere is as it is in Paris; and the Frenchman experiences the same astonishment,—that the whole world is not like France! Good taste consists in adapting ourselves to foreign countries without effacing our particular characteristics—as did Alcibiades, the model gentleman. Real charm is sympathetic; it lends itself to all circumstances, is in harmony with all social centres. It can wear a dress of simple stuff, remarkable only for its cut, in the street, instead of the plumes and loud costume which the bourgeois parades there.

Now Canalis, instigated by a woman who loved herself more than she loved him, wished to make himself a law and to be everywhere the great man he believed himself to be. He believed—an error shared by some of the greatest men of Paris—that he carried his public with him wherever he went.

While the poet made a studied entrance into the Chalet, La Brière slipped in like a dog who fears a whipping.

"Ah! I see my soldier!" exclaimed Canalis on observing Dumay, after having complimented Madame Mignon and bowed to the ladies. "Your anxieties are calmed, are they not?" he asked, extending his hand ostentatiously. "One can readily understand them after seeing mademoiselle. I was speaking of terrestrial creatures, not of angels."

Each and every one, by his attitude, seemed to demand an explanation of this enigmatical speech.

"Ah! I shall always count it as a triumph," resumed the poet, understanding that each one desired the meaning of his words, "to have moved one of those men of iron whom Napoléon used as the piles upon which he tried to build an empire—too colossal to be lasting; for such things time alone can cement. But is this indeed a triumph upon which I should pride myself—I who count for nothing? It was the triumph of the idea over the fact. Your battles, my dear Monsieur Dumay, your heroic charges, Monsieur le Comte, indeed war itself was the form in which Napoléon's thoughts clothed themselves. Of all these things, what remains? The grass which covers them says nothing, the harvests do not tell of their resting place, and without the historian, without our writings, the future would remain in ignorance of those heroic times! Thus your fifteen years of struggle resolve themselves into ideas, and that which will save the

Empire will be the poems which the poets make of it. A country which can gain such victories ought to know how to sing them."

Canalis paused and rapidly glanced at his audience, so as to gather the tribute of amazement which he expected provincials would offer.

"You cannot doubt, monsieur, my regret at not being able to see you," said Madame Mignon, "from the enjoyment I find in listening to you."

Determined, beforehand, to think Canalis sublime, Modeste, seated as she was at the opening of the story, remained wonderstruck, neglecting her embroidery, which had slipped from her fingers and was held only by the threaded needle.

"Modeste, this is Monsieur de la Brière.—Monsieur Ernest, my daughter," said Charles, seeing the secretary cast in the shade.

The young girl bowed coldly to Ernest with a look which might have convinced everyone present that she saw him for the first time.

"I beg your pardon, monsieur," she said to him without blushing, "the great admiration which I profess for the greatest of our poets must excuse me in the eyes of my friends for having seen only him."

This fresh and accented voice, like that of Mademoiselle Mars, which was so celebrated, charmed the poor secretary, already dazzled by Modeste's beauty, and in his surprise he replied by a phrase, sublime if it was true:

"But he is my friend," he said.

"Then you have already pardoned me," she replied.

"He is more than a friend," cried Canalis, leaning upon Ernest's shoulder like Alexander on Hephæstion; "we love each other like brothers,—"

Madame Latournelle cut short the great poet's words by pointing out Ernest to her husband and saying:

"Is not that the gentleman we saw in church?"

"Why not?"—replied Charles Mignon, seeing Ernest blush.

Modeste remained unmoved and took up her embroidery.

"Madame may be right. I have been to Havre twice," said La Brière, seating himself by Dumay.

Canalis, delighted with Modeste's beauty, misunderstood the admiration which she expressed and flattered himself that he had already completely succeeded in producing the desired effect.

"I should consider a man of genius to be without heart, if he had not some devoted friend near him," said Modeste, resuming the conversation interrupted by the awkwardness of Madame Latournelle.

"Mademoiselle, the devotion of Ernest makes me think that I am worth something," said Canalis, "for this dear Pylades is full of talent, he has been the right hand of the greatest minister we have had since peace was established. Although he holds a magnificent position he has consented to be my tutor in politics; he teaches me business principles, he nourishes me from his experience while he could

aspire to the highest destinies. Ah! he is worth more than I.—"

At a gesture from Modeste, Melchior added gracefully:

"Poetry, which I express, he carries in his heart, and if I speak thus frankly before him it is because he has the modesty of a nun."

"Enough, enough," said La Brière, who did not know which way to look. "My dear fellow, you remind me of a mother who wishes to marry her daughter."

"And how is it, monsieur," said Charles Mignon, addressing Canalis, "that you can think of becoming a politician?"

"For a poet, it is abdication," said Modeste. "Politics are the resources of ordinary men."

"Ah! mademoiselle, the tribune is now the greatest theatre in the world;—it has taken the place of the tournaments of chivalry; it will be the meeting place of all intellect just as the army has been the acme of all courage."

Canalis was astride his charger and talked for ten minutes on political life. "Poetry was but the preface to the statesman. To-day the orator has become a sublime reasoner, the shepherd of ideas. When a poet points out the way of the future to his country, does he cease to be himself?" He quoted Chateaubriand and declared that the day would come when he would be more famous in politics than in literature. "The French tribune was going to be the pharos of humanity. Oral struggles

would replace those of the battlefield. Some sessions of the Chamber were finer than Austerlitz, and orators showed themselves to be the equals of generals, they showed in their lives as much courage and strength as those who went to war. Was not speech one of the most tremendous outlets of the vital fluid which man possessed?" etc., etc.

This improvisation, composed of modern commonplaces, but clothed anew in sonorous expressions, of new words, and intended to prove that the Baron de Canalis would be, some day, one of the glories of the tribune, produced a profound impression upon the notary, Gobenheim, Madame Latournelle and Madame Mignon. Modeste sat as one at a play with an enthusiasm for the actor, just as Ernest sat looking at her; for if the secretary knew all these phrases by heart, he listened now through the eyes of the young girl and became more and more madly in love. For in the eyes of this true lover, Modeste eclipsed all the different Modestes which he had created in reading her letters and answering them.

This visit, the duration of which had been predetermined by Canalis, who knew better than to let his admirers weary of him, ended by an invitation to dinner on the following Monday.

"We shall not then be at the Chalet," said the Comte de la Bastie, "it will become, again, the abode of my friend Dumay. I am going back to the old house under a deed of redemption of six months' duration which I have just signed with Monsieur Vilquin at the office of my friend Latournelle—"

"I hope," said Dumay, "that Vilquin cannot return you the sum which you lent him—"

"You will have then an abode in keeping with your fortune,"—said Canalis.

"With the fortune which is accredited to me," said Charles Mignon quickly.

"It would be a pity," said Canalis, turning to Modeste and bowing gracefully, "if this Madonna did not have a frame worthy of her divine perfections."

This was all that Canalis said to Modeste, for he had hardly seemed to see her and had behaved like a man to whom all idea of marriage was denied.

"Ah! my dear Madame Mignon, he has a fine intellect," said the notary's wife, as soon as she heard the sound of the gravel of the garden crushed under the feet of the two Parisians.

"Is he rich? that is the important question," said Gobenheim.

Modeste was at the window so as not to lose a single movement of the great poet, but having no glance for poor Ernest de la Brière. When Monsieur Mignon came in, and when Modeste after having received the last bow from the two friends as the carriage turned away had come back to her seat, one of those profound discussions took place such as provincials always have about Parisians after a first interview. Gobenheim repeated his inquiry, "Is he rich?" as a chorus to the praises sung by Madame Latournelle, Modeste, and her mother.

"Rich!" cried Modeste, "what does that matter? Do you not see that Monsieur de Canalis is one of

those men destined to occupy the highest positions of state? He has more than fortune, he possesses the means of fortune."

"He will be minister or ambassador," said Monsieur Mignon.

"The taxpayers may nevertheless have to pay for his funeral," said the little Latournelle.

"And why so?" asked Charles Mignon.

"It seems to me that he will waste all fortunes with those 'means of fortune' so liberally accorded him by Mademoiselle Modeste."

"How can Modeste be other than liberal to a poet who calls her a Madonna?" said Dumay, faithful to the repugnance with which Canalis had inspired him.

Gobenheim arranged the whist table with all the more interest that since the return of Monsieur Mignon, Latournelle and Dumay allowed themselves to play for ten sous a point.

"Well, my angel," said the father to Modeste, in the embrasure of the window, "admit that papa thinks of everything. If you give your orders this evening to your former dressmaker in Paris and all your other furnishers, you can in eight days appear in all the splendor of an heiress while I shall have time to arrange for our installation in our house. You have a pretty pony, order a habit now, the Grand Equerry merits that attention—"

"All the more because there are people to ride with," said Modeste, on whose cheeks the color of health reappeared.

"The secretary does not amount to much," said Madame Mignon.

"He is a little stupid," replied Madame Latournelle. "The poet played the agreeable to everyone. He remembered to thank Latournelle for helping him to choose his house here, saying to me that he seemed to have consulted the taste of a woman. But the other was as gloomy as a Spaniard, with his eyes fixed on Modeste as if he would like to swallow her. If he had even looked at me I would have been afraid."

"He has a sweet voice," said Madame Mignon.

"He came to Havre no doubt to inquire about the Mignon house in the interest of the poet," said Modeste, winking at her father, "for it was certainly he whom we saw in the church."

Madame Dumay and Monsieur and Madame Latournelle accepted this explanation of Ernest's visit.

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"Do you know, Ernest," said Canalis, when twenty feet from the Chalet, "that I do not know anywhere in the world, in Paris, a single marriageable woman comparable to that adorable girl!"

"Ah! then all is said," replied La Brière with concentrated bitterness, "she loves you or if you wish it she will love you. Your fame has fought half the battle. In short, all is at your disposition. You shall go there again alone. Modeste has the most profound contempt for me, she is right, and I do not see why I should condemn myself to the suffering of admiring, desiring and adoring that which I can never possess."

After some words of condolence, in which appeared the satisfaction of having made a new edition of Cæsar's phrase, Canalis allowed his desire to break off with the Duchesse de Chaulieu to come to light. La Brière, not being able to bear this conversation, urged the beauty of a charming night, to get out of the carriage, when he ran like a madman towards the shore, where he remained until half-past ten, a prey to a sort of mania. Sometimes walking rapidly and talking to himself, sometimes sitting or standing, without noticing that two custom-house officers, on duty, anxiously watched him. After having loved the mental attainments

and the aggressive candor of Modeste, he had just added to it the adoration of beauty—that is to say, love without reason and inexpressible—to all the other reasons which had led him ten days before to the church in Havre.

He returned to the Chalet, where the Pyrenese dogs barked at him so ferociously that he could not even give himself the pleasure of looking at Modeste's windows. In love, all these things are no more to the lover than the work covered by the last coat of color is to the painter; but they constitute love, as the concealed work is the whole of art. From these a great painter and a true lover appear, whom the women and the public end, often too late, by adoring.

"Ah, well," he cried out, "I will remain, I will suffer, I will see her, I will love her for myself alone, selfishly! Modeste shall be my sun, my life, I will breathe her breath, I will enjoy her joys, I will waste away from her sorrows, even if she be the wife of that egotist Canalis."

"That is what I call love, monsieur," said a voice which came from a thicket on the edge of the road. "Does then everybody love Mademoiselle de la Bastie?" And Butscha appeared suddenly and looked up at La Brière. La Brière restrained his anger as he looked at the dwarf from head to foot in the moonlight, and took a few steps without replying to him.

"Between soldiers who are serving in the same company, there ought to be better comradeship than

that!" said Butscha. "If you do not love Canalis, I am not passionately fond of him myself."

"He is my friend," replied Ernest.

"Ah! you are the little secretary," replied the dwarf.

"Know, sir, that I am secretary to no one; I have the honor of being a counselor in one of the supreme courts of the kingdom."

"I have the honor then of saluting Monsieur de la Brière," said Butscha, "I have the honor to be the head clerk of Monsieur Latournelle, the supreme counselor of Havre, and I have certainly a finer position than yours. Yes, I have had the happiness of seeing Mademoiselle de la Bastie almost every evening for four years, and I expect to live near her always, as a servant of the king lives at the Tuileries. If the throne of Russia should be offered to me, I should reply, I love the sun too much! Does not this tell you, monsieur, that I am more interested in her than in myself, and with honorable intentions? Do you think that the proud Duchesse de Chaulieu regards the happiness of Madame de Canalis in a pleasing manner, when her maid, in love with Monsieur Germain, and already nervous at the stay which this charming valet is making at Havre, complains as she dresses her mistress's hair of—"

"How do you know these things?" said La Brière, interrupting Butscha.

"First, I am a lawyer's clerk," replied Butscha, "but you have surely noticed my hump, it is full of

inventions, monsieur; I have made myself a cousin of Mademoiselle Philoxène Jacmin, born at Honfleur, where my mother, a Jacmin, was born,—there are twelve branches of the Jacmins at Honfleur. Then my cousin, allured by an improbable inheritance, has told me many things."

"The duchess is vindictive," said La Brière.

"As a queen, so Philoxène told me; she has not pardoned Monsieur le Duc for being nothing more than her husband," replied Butscha, "she hates as she loves. I know her character, her toilette, her taste, her religion and her limitations, for Philoxène has shown her to me unclothed, both in body and mind. I went to the opera to see Madame de Chaulieu,—to say nothing of the play,—and I have not regretted my ten francs. If my so-called cousin had not told me that her mistress counted fifty summers, I should have thought myself very generous in giving her thirty; she has not known any winters, that duchess!"

"Yes," replied La Brière, "her face is a cameo preserved by its hardness. Canalis would be much embarrassed if the duchess knew his projects here, and I trust, monsieur, that you will refrain from more of this spying, which is unworthy of an honest man."

"Monsieur," replied Butscha, proudly, "for me Modeste is the State! I do not spy, I foresee. The duchess will come or remain in her tranquillity, as I see fit."

"You?"

"I, monsieur."

"And by what means?" said La Brière.

"Ah! that is it," said the little hunchback, as he took a blade of grass. "Look here! this grass believes that men construct palaces for it to live in, and some day it causes the most solidly-cemented walls to fall, like the people introduced into the structure of Feudalism, who have thrown it to the ground. The power of the weak man who can insinuate himself everywhere is greater than that of the strong man, who depends upon the strength of his arms. We are three Swiss guards who have vowed that Modeste shall be happy, and who would sell our honor for her. Adieu, monsieur! If you love Mademoiselle de la Bastie, forget this conversation, and shake my hand, for you seem to me to have a heart—I was anxious to see the Chalet, and I arrived there just as she blew out her candle. I heard the dogs barking at you, and I heard you raging; therefore I took the liberty of telling you that we are serving in the same company, that of Loyal Devotion."

"Ah, well," replied La Brière pressing the dwarf's hand, "do me the kindness to tell me if Mademoiselle Modeste has ever loved anyone before her secret correspondence with Canalis."

"Oh!" exclaimed Butscha, in a hollow voice, "even this suspicion is an injustice. And even now who knows if she loves? Does she know it herself? She became enamored of the mind, the genius, the soul of this dealer in stanzas, this vender

of literature; but she will study him, we shall all study him, I know well how to make the real character of this man appear from under the shell of his fine manners, and we shall see his head, less its ambition and its vanity," said Butscha, rubbing his hands. "At least mademoiselle will not be so foolish as to die of—"

"Oh! she remained in admiration before him as before a wonder," exclaimed La Brière, allowing the secret of his jealousy to escape him.

"If he is a good loyal fellow, if he loves her, if he is worthy of her and if he will renounce the duchess," replied Butscha—"I will manage the duchess! Here, my dear monsieur, follow this road and you will be home in ten minutes."

Butscha retraced his steps, and waved to poor Ernest, who, like a true lover, would have stood all night to talk about Modeste.

"Monsieur," said Butscha. "I have not yet had the honor of seeing our great poet, and I am curious to observe this great phenomenon in the exercise of his functions. Do me the favor to pass the evening of the day after to-morrow at the Chalet, remain there for a long time, for a man does not show himself in one hour. I shall be the first to know if he loves, if he can love, if he ever will love Mademoiselle Modeste."

"You are very young to—"

"Be a professor," interruped Butscha. "Ah! monsieur, abortive persons are born a hundred years old. You know a sick man, who has been long ill,

becomes finally more skilful than his physician, he understands his malady, which is not always the case with conscientious doctors. Well, in the same way a man who loves a woman and whom the woman must despise for his ugliness and deformity, ends by becoming so skilful in love that he appears seductive, as the sick man ends by recovering his health. Foolishness alone is incurable. Since I was six years old, and I am now twenty-five, I have had neither father nor mother; public charity has been my mother, and the king's procureur my father. Don't worry," he said in answer to a gesture from Ernest, "I am gayer than my position. —Well, for six years, since the insolent look of one of Madame Latournelle's servants told me that I had no right to think of love, I began to love and to study women. I began with the homely ones, for we must always take the bull by the horns. Therefore I selected my master's wife,—who surely is an angel to me,—for my first study. Perhaps I was wrong, but what could I do? I have passed through the alembic and I have discovered crouching at the bottom of her heart, this idea, 'I am not so homely as they think me.' Notwithstanding her deep piety, by taking advantage of this idea, I should have been able to lead her to the edge of the abyss—"

"And have you studied Modeste?"

"I thought I had told you that my life was hers," replied the hunchback, "as France belongs to the king! Now do you understand my spying at Paris? No one but myself knows all the nobleness, pride,

devotion, wonderful grace, inexhaustible goodness, true religion, gaiety, education, delicacy, affability of soul, heart and mind, of this adorable child."

Butscha took out his handkerchief to dry two tears, and La Brière pressed his hand for a long time.

"I live in her rays! They begin with her and end in me, and thus we are united, almost as nature is to God, by the Light and the Word. Adieu, monsieur, I have never chatted so much in my life before, but when I saw you before her windows, I divined that you love her as I do."

Without awaiting a reply, Butscha left the poor lover, to whose heart this conversation had been an indescribable balm. Ernest resolved to make a friend of Butscha, without suspecting that the clerk's loquacity had had for its special object the means of engaging information about Canalis.

In what an ebb and flow of thoughts, resolutions and plans of conduct Ernest was rocked to sleep that night! But his friend Canalis slept the sleep of victory, the sweetest sleep save that of the just.

At breakfast the two friends agreed to go together to pass the following evening at the Chalet and initiate themselves into the joys of provincial whist; but, in order to use up the day, they had their horses, which were broken to both carriage and saddle, brought around and took a turn on horseback into the country which was as unknown to them as China,—for that which is least known to the French in France is France itself.

In reflecting upon his position of an unhappy and despised lover, the secretary made a study of himself almost similar to that caused by the question put by Modeste at the commencement of their correspondence. Although misfortune is supposed to develop virtues, it develops them only in virtuous persons; for this kind of purification of the conscience is only possible in people who are naturally clean. La Brière promised himself to conceal his suffering like a Spartan, to remain dignified, and not to allow himself to be betrayed into any cowardice; while Canalis, fascinated by the enormity of the dowry, pledged himself to neglect nothing to captivate Modeste. Selfishness and devotion were the keynotes of these two characters, though a moral law, strange enough in its effects, brought about results contrary to their natures. The selfish man was going to play the part of abnegation, and the accommodating man was going to take refuge under the Aventine mount of Pride. This phenomenon is also observed in politics. A man often turns his character inside out, and it often happens that the public do not know which is the right side.

After dinner the two friends learned through Germain of the arrival of the Grand Equerry, who was presented at the Chalet in the evening by Monsieur Latournelle. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville hurt this worthy man's feelings by sending a footman to ask him to come to her, instead of simply sending her nephew in person; in which case Latournelle would have talked for the rest of his days of the Grand

Equerry's visit. Therefore, when his Lordship proposed to drive the little lawyer to Ingouville with him in his carriage, Latournelle told him that he was engaged to take Madame Latournelle there. Thinking, from the grave manner of the lawyer, that he had some mistake to repair the duke said to him graciously:

"If you will permit me, I shall have the honor of taking Madame Latournelle."

Notwithstanding the haughty mien of the despotic Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, the duke went out with the little lawyer. Beside herself with joy at seeing a splendid equipage before her doors, the steps of which were lowered by servants in royal livery, Madame Latournelle, on hearing that the Grand Equerry had come to take her, was too overcome to draw on her gloves, hold her parasol or put on the dignity she imagined the occasion required. Once in the carriage she heaped polite speeches on the duke, but her good-heartedness got the better of her when she exclaimed:

"Well, and what about Butscha?"

"Let us take Butscha," said the duke, smiling.

When the people on the quays, who gathered in groups to watch the magnificence of this equipage, saw the three little men with this tall, lean woman, they laughed.

"If all the men were welded together lengthwise perhaps there would be one man tall enough for that *pole!*" said a Bordeaux sailor.

"Have you anything else which you wish to

carry, madame?" asked the duke pleasantly, as the footman awaited orders.

"No, my lord," replied the lawyer's wife, blushing and looking at her husband, as if to ask: "What have I done wrong?"

"His lordship," said Butscha, "honors me by calling me something. A poor clerk like myself is generally considered a nonentity."

Although this was said with a smile, the duke reddened and made no reply. Great persons are always wrong to jest with their inferiors. Jesting is a game, and the game presupposes equality. It is to avoid the inconveniences of this passing equality, that when a game of cards is finished, the players have the right not to know one another any longer.

The ostensible reason for the visit of the Grand Equerry, was a colossal business matter. That is, to make available an immense tract of land left by the sea between the mouths of the rivers, the ownership of which had just been awarded to the d'Hérouville family by the Council of State. The question was nothing less than to place tide gates on two bridges, to drain a kilometre of sand three or four hundred acres broad, to cut canals through it and make roads in it. When the Duc d'Hérouville had explained the condition of this piece of land, Charles Mignon observed that it would be necessary to wait until nature had of its own accord consolidated it.

"Time, which has providentially enriched your house, monsieur, can alone finish its work," he said

as he concluded, "it would be prudent to allow fifty years to elapse before commencing the work."

"I hope this may not be your final opinion, Monsieur le Comte," said the duke. "Come to Hérouville and see it for yourself."

Charles Mignon replied that every capitalist should take time to examine this business deliberately, thus giving by this remark, a pretext to the Duc d'Hérouville to come to the Chalet.

The sight of Modeste made a vivid impression upon the duke. He asked for the honor of a call from her, saying that his sister and aunt had heard her spoken of and would be happy to make her acquaintance. Charles Mignon then proposed to present his daughter himself by going to invite the two ladies to dine with them on the day of their re-establishment at the villa, which the duke accepted. The sight of the blue ribbon, the title, and, especially, the ecstatic glances of the gentleman impressed Modeste, but she showed herself perfect in speech, bearing and dignity. The duke at last withdrew with reluctance, taking with him an invitation to visit the Chalet every evening, which invitation was based upon the recognized impossibility of a courtier of Charles X. being able to pass an evening without his whist.

So the next evening Modeste was going to see her three lovers together! Assuredly, whatever young girls may say about it, and whatever the heart's logic may decide as to sacrificing everything to preference, it is exceedingly flattering

to see around one's self several rival claimants, remarkable or celebrated men, or men of great name, trying to please. Even if Modeste suffer in your estimation, it must be acknowledged that she avowed later that the sentiments expressed in her letters paled before the pleasure of setting by the ears three men of such different minds, either one of whom taken separately would certainly have done honor to the most exacting family. Nevertheless this pleasure of self-love was dominated in her by the misanthropic malice caused by the terrible wound she had received, which, however, already began to seem like a disappointment only. Therefore, when her father said to her laughingly:

"Well, Modeste, do you wish to become a duchess?"

"Misfortune has made me a philosopher," she replied, with mock humility.

"You will be only a baroness?" asked Butscha.

"Or a viscountess?" added her father.

"How is that?" asked Modeste quickly.

"Why, if you accept Monsieur de la Brière, he will surely have influence enough with the king to succeed to my titles and arms."

"Oh! if it is a question of his disguising himself he will stand on no ceremony about it," replied Modeste bitterly.

Butscha did not understand this epigrammatic speech, the sense of which could only be guessed at by Monsieur and Madame Mignon and Dumay.

"As soon as it is a question of marriage, all men

disguise themselves," said Madame Latournelle, "and women set them the example. I have heard all my life the expression, 'Monsieur or Mademoiselle So-and-so has made a good marriage,' therefore the other must have made a bad one."

"Marriage," said Butscha, "is like a lawsuit, there is always one discontented party; and if one dupe dupes the other, half the married people play a comedy at the expense of the other half."

"And you decide, Monsieur Butscha?" said Modeste.

"To pay the strictest attention to the manœuvres of the enemy," replied the clerk.

"What did I tell you, my darling?" said Charles Mignon, alluding to the scene with his daughter on the seashore.

"To marry," said Latournelle, "men play as many parts as mothers make their daughters play, to get rid of them."

"Then you approve of strategy?" asked Modeste.

"On both sides," exclaimed Gobenheim, "then the match is equal."

This conversation, carried on in a desultory way across the whist-table and in the midst of cutting and dealing, turned on Monsieur d'Hérouville, who was thought very good-looking by the little lawyer, little Dumay and little Butscha.

"I see," said Madame Mignon, with a smile, "that Madame Latournelle and my poor husband are monstrosities in size here."

"Happily for him, the colonel is not so very

large," replied Butscha while his master dealt the cards, "for a great and intelligent man is always an exception."

Without this little discussion upon the legality of matrimonial stratagems, perhaps the account of the evening, awaited with such impatience by Butscha, would be considered too long; but the fortune for which so many secret, cowardly acts had been committed, lends to the details of private life an immense interest, which social sentiment, so frankly defined by Ernest in his reply to Modeste, will always develop.

The next morning Desplein arrived, but remained only long enough to send to Havre for fresh post-horses and to have them harnessed, which took about an hour. He decided, after having examined Madame Mignon, that she would recover her sight, and he appointed a month later as the opportune moment for the operation.

Naturally, this important consultation took place before the agitated occupants of the Chalet, who breathlessly awaited the decision of this prince of science. As the illustrious member of the Scientific Academy examined the blind woman's eyes by the full daylight, at the window, he asked her a dozen brief questions. Modeste was astonished at the value of time to so celebrated a man, as she noticed that the traveling carriage was full of books which the savant proposed to read during his return to Paris, for having set out the evening before he had availed of the night for sleeping and traveling. The

rapidity and clearness of the decisions which Desplein formed on every reply of Madame Mignon, his concise style and manner, all gave Modeste, for the first time, a correct idea of a man of genius. She recognized enormous differences between a secondary man like Canalis, and Desplein, who was more than his superior. The man of genius has, in the consciousness of his talent and in the solidity of fame, a career in which his legitimate pride exercises and airs itself without annoying anyone. Then, too, his constant strife with men and things does not allow him time to give himself up to the affectations which are permissible in men of fashion, who hasten to gather the harvests of a fleeting season, and whose vanity and self-love have the unreasonableness and pettiness of a custom-house officer quick to collect dues on everything which passes the door. Modeste was as much enchanted with this great practitioner as he seemed struck with her exquisite beauty—he, between whose hands so many women passed and who, for so long a time, had examined them, as it were, with magnifying glasses and scalpel.

"It would indeed be a pity," he said, with that tone of gallantry which he knew how to use, and which contrasted with his pretended brusqueness, "if a mother should be deprived of seeing so charming a daughter."

Modeste wished, herself, to serve the simple lunch which the surgeon accepted. She, with her father and Dumay, accompanied the learned man, awaited

by so many sufferers, to the carriage which was stationed at the little gate and there again, her eyes brightened by hope, she said to Desplein:

"My dear mother will really see me?"

"Yes, my little will-o'-the-wisp, I promise you," he replied, with a smile, "and I am incapable of deceiving you, for I also have a daughter."

The carriage started at these words of Desplein which were full of unexpected grace. Nothing charms more than the unlooked-for in persons of talent.

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This visit was the event of the day and left a luminous trace in Modeste's heart. The young enthusiast unaffectedly admired this man, whose life belonged to others and with whom the habit of occupying himself with physical sufferings had destroyed the manifestations of egotism. In the evening, when Gobenheim, the Latournelles and Butscha, Canalis, Ernest and the Duc d'Hérouville were assembled, each congratulated the members of the Mignon family on the good news brought by Desplein. Then, naturally, the conversation, in which Modeste took the prominent part, as her letters would promise, turned upon this man whose genius, unfortunately for his fame, was valued only by the race of scientific men and doctors. Gobenheim allowed a phrase to escape him, which in our day is the sacred acme of genius, in the conception of economists and bankers:

"He makes a pile of money!"

"He is said to be very eager after it," said Canalis.

The praise given to Desplein by Modeste annoyed the poet. Vanity acts like women. Both think they lose something when praise is given to others. Voltaire was jealous of the wit of a roué whom Paris admired for a few days, even as a duchess is offended by the glances cast upon her maid. Such

is the avarice of these two sentiments that they consider themselves robbed of the share given to a poor man.

"Do you think, monsieur," asked Modeste, smiling, "that one should judge genius by ordinary standards?"

"Perhaps, before all else, we must define the man of genius," replied Canalis, "and one of his conditions is invention;—invention of a form, a system or a force. Thus Napoléon was an inventor, apart from his other conditions of genius. He invented his method of making war. Walter Scott is an inventor; Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier are inventors. Such men are men of genius of the first rank. They renew, increase or modify Science or Art. But Desplein is a man whose immense talent consists in applying exactly the laws already discovered, that is to note, by a natural gift, the peculiarities of each temperament and the hour intended by nature to perform the operation. He did not found, like Hippocrates, the science itself. He did not discover a system, like Galen, Broussais or Rasori. He has a genius of execution, like Moscheles upon the piano, Paganini upon the violin, and Tarinelli upon his own larynx! people who have developed immense faculties, but who do not create music. Between Beethoven and Catalani, you will allow me to award to the one the immortal crown of a genius and a martyr, and to the other innumerable five-franc pieces; with the one we are quits, while the world remains always the debtor of the other!

We grow more in debt every day to Molière and we have paid Baron too much."

"I think, my friend, that you make the prerogative of ideas too important," said La Brière in a gentle, melodious voice, producing a sudden contrast to the peremptory tone of the poet, whose flexible voice had abandoned the tone of cajolery for the official tone of the rostrum. "Genius should be esteemed, especially on account of its usefulness. Parmentier, Jacquard and Papin, to whom statues will be erected some day, are also men of genius. They have changed, or will change, the aspect of the State in one sense or another. In this connection Desplein will always present himself to the eyes of thinkers accompanied by an entire generation whose tears and sufferings have ceased through the skill of his powerful hand."

It was enough that Ernest had given this opinion for Modeste to wish to contradict it.

"At this rate, monsieur, the man who discovers the means of mowing wheat without spoiling the straw, by a machine which would do the work of ten reapers, would be a man of genius."

"Oh! yes, my child," said Madame Mignon, "he would be blessed by the poor whose bread would cost them less, and he who is blessed by the poor is blessed by God."

"That is making art secondary to utility," replied Modeste, tossing her head.

"Without utility," said Charles Mignon, "what would become of art? How would it support itself?

What would it live on, where would it find shelter and who would pay the poet?"

"Oh! my dear father, that is indeed the opinion of a man who has been away in foreign parts, of a tradesman or an antediluvian. Let Gobenheim and Monsieur La Brière, who are interested in the solution of this social problem, maintain that opinion and I can understand it, but you, whose life has been the most useless poetry of this century, since your blood was shed throughout Europe and your fearful sufferings exacted by a giant, have not prevented France from losing ten departments acquired by the Republic; how can you fall into this reasoning, exceedingly headstrong, as the idealists say?—It is plain that you have just come from China."

The impertinence of Modeste's speech was aggravated by a slight tone of contempt and disdain which she had purposely assumed and which equally astonished Madame Latournelle, Madame Mignon and Dumay. Madame Latournelle could not see through it, though she opened her eyes very wide, and Butscha, whose attention was like that of a spy, looked in a significant manner at Monsieur Mignon as he saw the latter's face color with a quick and lively indignation.

"A little more, mademoiselle, and you would have been wanting in respect towards your father," said the colonel, smiling, having been enlightened by Butscha's glance. "See what it is to spoil one's children."

"I am an only child!"—she replied saucily.

"Only?" repeated the lawyer, accenting the word.

"Monsieur," replied Modeste sharply to Latournelle, "my father is very fortunate in having me for his preceptor. He has given me life, I give him knowledge, he still remains in my debt."

"There seems occasion for it," said Madame Mignon.

"But mademoiselle is right," continued Canalis, as he rose and leaned against the mantelpiece in one of the most beautiful of his collection of poses. "God in His foresight gave food and clothing to man, and He has not given him art directly! He said to man, 'to live, you must bend yourself toward the earth; to think, you must raise yourself to Me! We need the life of the soul as much as the life of the body. Hence these two utilities. Certainly one does not shoe himself with a book, and an epic poem is not of as much value from a utilitarian point of view as an economical soup from the bureau of public charities. The most beautiful idea would be a poor substitute for the sail of a vessel. It is true that an automatic cotton-gin procures calico for us at thirty cents a metre cheaper than ever before; but this machine and the perfections of industry do not breathe life to a people and will not tell in the future that they have existed; whilst Egyptian, Mexican, Grecian and Roman art with their masterpieces, accused of being useless, have attested the existence of these people during vast epochs of time, in which great intermediate nations,

stripped of men of genius, have disappeared without leaving on the globe the impressions of their features. All works of genius are the *summum* of a civilization and presuppose an immense usefulness. Surely a pair of shoes do not outweigh in your eyes a theatrical piece, and you do not prefer a mill to the church of Saint-Ouen? Well, then, a nation is animated by the same sentiments as a man, and man's favorite idea is to survive himself morally, as he reproduces himself physically. The survival of a nation depends on the work of its men of genius. At this moment, France proves emphatically the truth of this theory. England surpasses her in industry, commerce and navigation; and, nevertheless, she stands, I believe, at the head of the world through her artists, her men of talent and the style of her productions. There is not an artist nor an intellect who does not come to ask Paris for his diploma. Just now there is no school of painting, save in France, and we shall, perhaps, reign more surely and longer by the book than by the sword. In Ernest's system, the flowers of luxury would be suppressed, the beauty of women, music, painting and poetry. Society would not be overthrown, but, I ask you, who would willingly accept such a life? Everything that is useful is frightful and homely. The kitchen is indispensable to a house, but you do not choose to stay there and you live in a salon, which you decorate like this with things entirely superfluous. To what use are these charming pictures and this sculptured wood? There

is beauty only in that which seems useless. We have called the period of Louis XVI. 'the Renaissance,' with perfect justness of expression. This period was the dawn of a new world. Men will speak of it still when many past centuries will be forgotten, centuries whose only merit will be in having existed, like the millions of beings who are but units in a generation."

"Rubbish let it be! my rubbish is very dear to me," responded the Duc d'Hérouville pleasantly, during the silence which followed this pompous prose debate.

"Does the art, in which according to you, genius is called to make its evolutions, exist at all?" asked Butscha, attacking Canalis. "Is it not a splendid lie which the social man is deluded enough to believe? What need have I for a Norman landscape in my room, when I can see one much better done by God? We have more beautiful poems in our dreams than the *Iliad*. For a small sum of money I can find at Valogne, at Carentan, in Provence, at Arles, many a Venus just as beautiful as those of Titian. The *Gazette des Tribunaux* publishes stories, somewhat different from those of Walter Scott, which end terribly in blood and not in ink. Happiness and virtue are above art or genius."

"Bravo, Butscha!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"What did he say? asked Canalis of La Brière, failing to gather in the eyes and attitude of Modeste the charming testimony of her artless admiration.

The scorn which she had showed toward La

Brière, and above all the disrespectful speeches of the girl to her father, had so saddened the poor young man, that he did not reply to Canalis; his eyes were fixed sadly on Modeste in profound thought. The clerk's argument was taken up and cleverly sustained by the Duc d'Hérouville, who ended by saying that the ecstasies of Saint Thérèse were far more noble than any creation of Lord Byron.

"Oh! Monsieur le Duc, that was a personal poetry only, whereas the genius of Byron and Molière have benefited the world at large," said Modeste.

"How does that agree with Monsieur le Baron?" interrupted Charles Mignon quickly. "You are now trying to make us believe that genius should be useful as if it were a bale of cotton; but perhaps you think logic as headstrong, as old as your poor, good father."

Butscha, La Brière and Madame Latournelle exchanged glances which were more or less mocking, which so irritated Modeste that for a time she was silent.

"Never mind, mademoiselle," said Canalis smiling at her, "we are neither beaten nor caught in a contradiction. Every work of art, be it of literature, music, painting, sculpture or architecture, implies a positive social utility, equal to that of all other commercial products. Art is pre-eminently commerce, it presupposes it. A book to-day is published, which brings its author something like ten thousand francs. The printing of it means the

manufactory of paper, a foundry, book binding, in fact, a thousand arms put into action. The execution of a symphony by Beethoven or an opera by Rossini demands the work of just as many arms, machinery and manufactories. The cost of a monument is an almost brutal illustration of this point. Indeed we may say that the works of genius have an extremely costly basis, and necessarily are profitable to the workingman."

Once started on this theme, Canalis spoke for some minutes with a luxury of images and phrases which greatly delighted him; but like a great many fine talkers, it happened at the conclusion of his remarks, that he found himself at the point from which he began to argue and that he was really in accord with La Brière without himself perceiving it.

"I observe with pleasure, my dear baron," said the little Duc d'Hérouville slyly, "that you will make a great constitutional minister."

"Oh!" said Canalis with the gesture of a great man, "what is proved in all these discussions? The eternal truth of this axiom: all things are true and all things are false. Moral truths, as created beings, change their aspect according to the point of view."

"However, Society exists through certain decided opinions," said the Duc d'Hérouville.

"What lax ideas," whispered Madame Latournelle to her husband.

"He is a poet," replied Gobenheim, who had heard the whisper.

Canalis, who was ten leagues above the heads of

his audience, and who after all may have been right in his last philosophical remark, took the aspect of the cold indifference depicted on all the faces as symptoms of their ignorance; but seeing that Modeste had understood him, he was satisfied, being unaware of the fact that monologue is disagreeable to country folks whose principal occupation is to show Parisians the manner of life, the intelligence and wisdom of the provinces.

"Is it long since you saw the Duchesse de Chaulieu?" the duke asked of Canalis, to change the conversation.

"I left her only six days ago," replied Canalis.

"She was well?"

"Perfectly well."

"Have the goodness to recall me to her remembrance when you write to her."

"They say that she is very charming?" said Modeste addressing the duke.

"Monsieur le Baron can speak more knowingly on that point than I," replied the Grand Equerry.

"More than charming," said Canalis, accepting the perfidy of Monsieur d'Hérouville; "but then, mademoiselle, I am partial. She has been my friend for ten years; I owe her all that is good in me, she preserved me from the dangers of the world. Indeed, Monsieur le Duc de Chaulieu helped me to enter my present position. Without the protection of that family the king, the princesses, would have forgotten a poor poet like me; and my affection for the duchess will always be full of gratitude."

This was said in a voice quivering with emotion.

"How we ought to love her who has inclined you to write those beautiful songs and inspired you with such beautiful feelings," said Modeste dreamily. "Can one conceive of a poet without a Muse?"

"He would be without heart and would write dry verses like Voltaire, who never loved any one except—Voltaire," replied Canalis.

"Did you not do me the honor to tell me in Paris, that you never felt the sentiments that you expressed?" asked the Breton of Canalis.

"The shoe fits, my brave soldier," said the poet, smiling, "but understand that it is possible to have at the same time much heart in the intellectual and in real life. One can express much beautiful sentiment without feeling it, and feel much without expressing it. La Brière, my friend here, is desperately in love," said he with generosity, looking at Modeste, "while I, who certainly love as much as he—at least I think so—can give my love a literary form in harmony with its intensity. But I do not promise, mademoiselle," he said, turning to Modeste with graceful affectation, "not to be without inspiration to-morrow."

Thus the poet triumphed over all obstacles. In honor of his love, he overcame all difficulties thrown in his way, and Modeste remained dazzled by this Parisian brilliancy which she knew nothing about and which scintillated constantly in this man's conversation.

"What an acrobat!" said Butscha in Latournelle's

ear after having listened to a magnificent tirade upon the Catholic religion and the happiness of having a pious woman for a wife, which was served in response to a remark made by Madame Mignon.

Modeste's eyes were blindfolded. The distinction of the debater and the attention which she had prearranged to give Canalis, prevented her from seeing what Butscha easily remarked: the lack of simplicity in declamation, the emphasis substituted for sentiment and all the incoherencies of speech which had caused the clerk to make his almost cruel estimate of him. When Monsieur Mignon, Dumay, Butscha and Latournelle were astonished at the inconsequence of Canalis,—even taking into consideration the inconsequence of such conversations in France,—Modeste admired the poet's suppleness and said to herself, as she led him through the by-ways of her fancy: "He loves me!" Butscha, like all the other spectators of what we must call a *stage scene*, was struck with the principal defect of all egoists, which Canalis, like all people accustomed to discourse in salons, allowed to be seen too plainly. Whether he understood in advance what his interlocutor was going to say, whether he did not listen or whether he had the faculty of listening while thinking of something else, Melchior's face presented an indifferent expression which discouraged the speaker as much as it wounded his vanity.

Inattention is not only a want of politeness, but is a lack of respect. Now, Canalis carried this habit a little too far, for he often forgot to reply to

a speech which required an answer, and passed without any polite transition to the subject which interested him. This impertinence is accepted without protest in a man of high position, although it engenders a leaven of hate and vengeance in the depths of many hearts, and between equals it goes so far as to destroy friendship. When, perchance, Melchior was forced to listen, he fell into another fault: he only lent his attention and never gave it.

Although this may not be so rude, this semi-concession annoys the listener almost as much and leaves him dissatisfied. Nothing adds more to the pleasure of society than the small change of attention. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," is not only a Gospel precept, it is also excellent advice; follow it and nothing else will matter much, not even vice. Canalis took a great deal of pains to please Modeste, and although he was most complaisant with her, he became himself again with the others.

Modeste, careless of the fact that she was making ten martyrs by the request, begged Canalis to read one of his pieces of verse. She wished, she said, a sample of his talent as reader, of which she had heard so much.

Canalis took the volume which Modeste handed him and cooed—for that is the proper word for it—that one of his poems which was considered the finest—an imitation of Moore's "Loves of the Angels," entitled VITALIS, which Madame

Latournelle, Madame Dumay, Gobenheim and the cashier took in with several yawns.

"If you play whist well, monsieur," said Gobenheim, presenting five cards held like a fan, "I will say that I have never seen a man so accomplished as you."

This remark was greeted with laughter, for it was the expression of everyone's thought.

"I play it enough to be able to live in the provinces the rest of my days," replied Canalis. "That no doubt is enough literature and conversation for whist players," he added, throwing the volume impatiently on the table.

This detail will show the dangers which beset the hero of a salon, when like Canalis, he goes out of his sphere; he then resembles the favored actor of a certain public whose talent is lost in leaving his own boards for those of a higher-class theatre.

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The baron and the duke played against Gobenheim and Latournelle. Modeste took a seat near the poet, to the despair of poor Ernest, who followed the progress of the fascination which Canalis exerted on the capricious girl. La Brière did not possess this gift of seduction with which Melchior was favored. Nature frequently denies it to genuine-hearted people who are usually timid. This gift demands courage, a vivacity of ways and means which might be called the slack-rope of the mind, even a little mimicry, but is there not always, morally speaking, something of the comedian in a poet? Between expressing sentiments which we do not feel, but of which we can imagine all the variations, and feigning them when we have need of them for success on the stage of private life, there is a great difference. Nevertheless, if the necessary hypocrisy of a man of the world may have gangrened a poet, he becomes able to transport the faculties of his talent into the expression of any required sentiment, as a man condemned to solitude ends by transmitting his heart into his mind.

"He is only working for her millions," said La Brière sadly to himself, "and yet he plays passion so well that Modeste will believe in it."

Instead of trying to be more amiable and more clever than his rival, La Brière imitated the Duc

d'Hérouville and remained gloomy, uneasy and watchful, and, whereas, the courtier studied the freaks of the young heiress, Ernest was a prey to the trials of the direst jealousy. He had not obtained a single glance from his idol when he went away for a few moments with Butscha.

"It is all over," he said, "she is mad over him, I am more than displeasing to her, and, moreover, she is right! Canalis is charming, there is cleverness even in his silence, passion in his eyes, poetry in his conversation—"

"Is he an honest man?" asked Butscha.

"Oh! yes," replied La Brière. "He is loyal and chivalrous and capable, under Modeste's influence, of losing those little affectations which Madame de Chaulieu has taught him."

"You are a brave fellow," said the little hunchback. "But is he capable of loving—will he love her?"

"I do not know," replied La Brière. "Has she spoken of me?" he asked after a moment of silence.

"Yes," said Butscha, who recalled to La Brière what Modeste had said about disguises.

The secretary threw himself upon a bench and buried his head in his hands; he could not keep back the tears and he did not wish Butscha to see them; but the dwarf was just the man to guess at them.

"What is the matter, monsieur?" asked Butscha.

"She is right!" said La Brière, getting up quickly, "I am a wretch!"

And he related the deception into which Canalis had led him, but assuring Butscha that he had wanted to undeceive Modeste before she unmasked herself and apostrophizing, in youthful fashion, his unhappy destiny. Butscha sympathetically recognized his love in his vigorous, naïve language, his genuineness and his profound anxiety.

"But why don't you show your real self to mademoiselle," said Butscha, "why do you leave everything to your rival?"

"Ah! then you have never felt your throat tighten when you tried to speak to her. You have not felt something at the roots of your hair and on the surface of your skin as she looks at you for an instant when her eye wanders—" cried La Brière.

"But you had enough judgment to show sadness when she as good as said to her father: 'You are a crank!'"

"Monsieur, I love her too well not to have felt a dagger enter my heart when I heard her thus belie the perfect ideal I had formed of her."

"Canalis justified her in it," said Butscha.

"If she had more self-love than heart, one might lose her without regret," replied La Brière.

At this moment Modeste, followed by Canalis, who had lost at cards, came out with her father and Madame Dumay to breathe the air of the starlit night. While his daughter promenaded with the poet, Charles Mignon left her to join La Brière.

"Your friend, monsieur, ought to have been a

lawyer," he said smiling and looking attentively at the young man.

"You must not judge a poet with the severity which you would an ordinary man like me, for example," replied La Brière. "The poet has his mission. He is destined by nature to see poetry in questions, just as he expresses it in everything. Even when you think him inconsistent with himself, he is true to his vocation. He is the painter, copying equally well a Madonna or a courtesan. Molière was as correct in his characters of old men as in those of young people, and surely Molière had sound judgment. These witticisms, corruptive to inferior men, have no influence upon the character of truly great men."

Charles Mignon pressed La Brière's hand, saying to him:

"This facility would, nevertheless, serve to justify diametrically opposed actions, especially in politics."

"Ah! mademoiselle," replied Canalis at this moment, with a cajoling voice to a mischievous remark by Modeste, "do not believe that the multiplicity of sensations takes the least strength from the sentiments. Poets, more than other men, ought to love with constancy and faith. To begin with, do not be jealous of that which is called the Muse. Happy the wife of a busy man! If you could hear the complaints of the women who endure the burden of the idleness of husbands without office, or to whom wealth allows great leisure, you would know

that the chief happiness of a Parisian woman is the freedom, the sovereignty at home. But we authors allow the wife to wield the sceptre with us, for it is impossible for us to descend to the tyranny exercised by small minds. We have better things to do.—If I should ever marry, which I vow to you is a catastrophe far distant from me, I should wish that my wife should have the moral liberty which a mistress keeps and which is, perhaps, the source of all her attractions."

Canalis thus displayed his spirits and graces in speaking of love, marriage and the adoration of women, in discussion with Modeste, until Monsieur Mignon, who had just joined them, found the occasion, in a moment of silence, to take his daughter by the arm and lead her to Ernest, whom the worthy soldier had counseled to attempt an explanation with her.

"Mademoiselle," said Ernest in a faltering voice, "it is impossible for me to remain under the weight of your displeasure. I do not defend myelf; I do not seek to justify myself. I only wish to observe to you that before reading your flattering letter addressed to the person himself, and not to the poet, —the last, in short, I wished to dispel the error in which you were, and let you know of it by a word written from Havre. All the sentiments which I had the honor to express to you are sincere. A hope shone for me, when at Paris your father said he was poor; but now, if all is lost, if I have only eternal regrets, why should I remain here, where

all is agony to me?—Allow me then to carry away one smile from you. It will be engraved upon my heart."

"Monsieur," replied Modeste, who appeared cold and absent-minded, "I am not mistress here, but surely I should regret to retain here those who find neither pleasure nor happiness."

She left the auditor as she took Madame Dumay's arm to enter the house. Some moments later, all the personages of this domestic scene, again assembled in the salon, were much surprised to see Modeste seated at the side of the Duc d'Hérouville, flirting with him as the most artful Parisian woman would have done. She interested herself in his play, gave him the advice which he asked, and found the opportunity to say flattering things to him, ranking the accident of noble birth as lofty as that of talent or beauty. Canalis knew, or thought he knew, the cause of this change, for he had wished to pique Modeste, in treating marriage as a catastrophe and in showing himself as averse to it; but, like all who play with fire, he had burned himself. Modeste's pride, her disdain, alarmed the poet, and he returned to her giving the spectacle of a jealousy, all the more visible, as it was assumed. Modeste, implacable as the angels, enjoyed the pleasure which the use of her power gave her and naturally she abused it. The Duc d'Hérouville had never had such an agreeable time! A woman actually smiled at him! At eleven o'clock, an unheard-of hour at the Chalet, the three lovers left, the duke

finding Modeste charming, Canalis finding her exceedingly coquettish, and La Brière broken-hearted by her severity.

For a week, the heiress behaved with her three lovers as she had during this evening, so that the poet appeared to have the ascendency over his rivals, notwithstanding the whims and freaks which from time to time gave the Duc d'Hérouville hope. Modeste's want of respect toward her father and the great liberties she took with him, her impatience with her blind mother in doing perfunctorily those little services which formerly were the triumph of her filial piety, seemed the effect of a fanciful disposition and of a freedom allowed since her childhood. When Modeste went too far, she moralized to herself and attributed her frivolousness and her pranks to her independent spirit. She declared to the duke and to Canalis her distaste for obedience, and regarded it as a real obstacle to her marrying, in this way catechising the moral status of her wooers after the manner of those who dig the earth in order to take from it gold, coal, stone or water.

"I shall never find," she said, the evening before the installation of the family in the villa was to take place, "a husband who will bear my caprices with the goodness of my father, who has never deviated from it, nor with the indulgence of my adorable mother."

"They know they are beloved, mademoiselle," said La Brière.

"Be assured, mademoiselle, that your husband

will appreciate the value of his treasure," added the duke.

"You have more spirit and resolution than is necessary to discipline a husband," said Canalis laughing.

Modeste smiled as Henri IV. ought to have smiled after having revealed to a foreign ambassador, the character of his three principal ministers by three replies to an insidious question.

The day of the dinner, Modeste, influenced by the preference which she gave to Canalis, walked for a long time alone with him on the gravel plot which was between the house and the lawn, ornamented with flowers. From the gestures of the poet and from the appearance of the young heiress, it was easy to see that she listened favorably to Canalis. So the two Mesdemoiselles d'Hérouville came to interrupt this scandalous tête-à-tête, and with the cleverness natural to women on such occasions, they led the conversation to court matters, upon the brilliancy of an office of the Crown, in explaining the differences which existed between the offices of the king's household and those of the Crown; they tried to intoxicate Modeste's mind by touching her pride and showing her one of the highest destinies to which a woman could aspire.

"To have a duke for a son," exclaimed the elder woman, "is a positive advantage. This title is a fortune, entirely unassailable, which one gives to his children."

"To what chance," said Canalis, displeased at

having his conversation interrupted, "can we attribute the little success which Monsieur the Grand Equerry has had until the present time, in the matter in which this title can best serve a man's pretensions?"

The two ladies cast a look at Canalis which was as full of poison as the bite of a viper would have been, and they were so disconcerted by Modeste's mocking smile that they could not say a word in reply.

"Monsieur the Grand Equerry," said Modeste to Canalis, "has never reproached you for the humility which your fame inspires. Why bear him malice for his modesty?"

"Besides, we have not yet met a woman worthy of my nephew's rank," said the elder lady. "We have met some who had only the fortune for this position; others, without the fortune, who had only intelligence; and I avow that we have been obliged to wait a long time before God has given us the opportunity to make the acquaintance of a person in whom nobility, intelligence and the fortune of a Duchesse d'Hérouville are to be found. There are, my dear Modeste," said Hélène d'Hérouville, as she led her new friend a few steps away, "a thousand Barons de Canalis in the kingdom, as there are a hundred poets at Paris his equal, and he is so little a great man, that I, a poor girl destined to take the veil in default of a dowry, would not have him. Besides, you do not know what a young man is who has been taken advantage of for ten years by the

Duchesse de Chaulieu. Really, only an old woman almost sixty, could submit to the little weaknesses with which it is said the great poet is afflicted, and the least of which in Louis XIV. was an insupportable fault. But the duchess does not suffer from them as much, it is true, as a wife would, for she has not always had him with her as a husband would be—" and practising one of those manœuvres peculiar to women between themselves, Hélène d'Hérouville repeated in a whisper the scandals which women, jealous of Madame de Chaulieu, spread about the poet. This little detail, common enough in young people's conversations, will show with what desperation the fortune of the Comte de la Bastie was already contested.

In ten days, the opinions at the Chalet had greatly varied about the three personages who aspired to Modeste's hand. This change, which was entirely to Canalis's disadvantage, was based upon considerations of a nature which ought to cause the possessors of any kind of fame to pause and reflect. It cannot be denied when we remember the passion with which autograph collecting is pursued, that public curiosity is intensely excited by celebrity. Most provincial people evidently do not take an exact account of the way in which illustrious persons put on their cravats, walk upon the boulevard, stare into vacancy, or eat a cutlet; for when they see a man dressed fashionably, or shining in a popularity more or less fleeting,—but always envied, —some say: "Oh! that is he!" or even: "He is

a character!" and other strange exclamations. In a word, the strange charm which all kinds of fame cause, even when justly acquired, is not maintained. It is, particularly for superficial persons, mockers, or those who are envious, a sensation fleeting as lightning, and which does not reappear. It seems that glory, like the sun, warm and luminous at a distance, is, if one approaches it, cold as the summit of an Alp. Perhaps man is only great to his peers, and the faults inherent to the human condition disappear sooner to their eyes than to those of common admirers. A poet, to please every day, should be bound to display the deceitful graces of people who understand how to make their obscurity pardoned by their pleasing ways and their agreeable conversation; for, besides genius, everyone demands of him the weak virtues of the salon and the insipidity of the family. The great poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, who did not comply with this social law, saw an insulting indifference succeed the bewilderment caused by his conversations on the first evenings. Brilliancy, lavished without limit, produces upon the soul the effect of a glassware shop upon the eyes; it is sufficient to say that the fire, the brilliancy of Canalis soon wearied those people, who, according to their way of putting it, liked solidity. Soon obliged to show himself an ordinary man, the poet encountered many dangers upon a ground where La Brière conquered the approbation of those who at first had found him sullen. They felt the necessity of avenging themselves upon the

reputation of Canalis, by preferring his friend to him. The best persons are influenced by these things. The simple and straightforward auditor offended no one's self-love, and in returning to him, each one discovered in him heart, true modesty, safe discretion, and an excellent bearing. The Duc d'Hérouville placed Ernest for political worth far above Canalis. The poet, ill-balanced, ambitious and changeable as Tasso, loved luxury and grandeur and he ran into debt; while the young lawyer of an equable disposition, lived prudently, usefully, without noise, waiting for rewards without begging for them, and saving money. Canalis had, besides, to those of the middle-class who watched him, a special reason for distrust. For two or three days past, he had showed movements of impatience, discouragement, melancholy without any apparent reason, of changes of temper, the fruits of the nervous temperament of poets. These queer ways,—the provincial expression,—engendered by the anxieties which his wrongs towards the Duchesse de Chaulieu caused him, which had grown greater from day to day, and to whom he should have written without being able to bring himself to it,—all these were carefully remarked by the gentle American and by the worthy Madame Latournelle, and were the subject of more than one conversation between them and Madame Mignon. Canalis felt the effects of these conversations without being able to explain them. The attention was not the same, the countenances offered to him no longer that enchanted

appearance of the first days; while Ernest commenced to make himself heard. For two days the poet attempted to captivate Modeste and profited by every instant when he found himself alone with her to surround her with the net of passionate language. Modeste's heightened color had apprised the two ladies with what pleasure the heiress listened to the delicious conceits, deliciously said; and anxious at the progress of affairs, they had just recourse to the *ultima ratio* of women in like cases,—that is, those calumnies which rarely fail of their effect,—being directed to the most violent physical repugnances. Therefore, as he placed himself at table, the poet noticed shadows upon his idol's forehead, and he read there the perfidy of Mademoiselle d'Hérouville and judged it best to offer himself as a husband as soon as he could talk with Modeste. Hearing some tart but polite speeches exchanged between Canalis and the two noble ladies, Gobenheim jogged his neighbor, Butscha, by the elbow, motioning toward the poet and the Grand Equerry.

"They will knock each other to pieces," he said in his ear.

"Canalis has indeed genius enough to knock himself to pieces by himself alone," replied the dwarf.

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During the dinner, which was magnificent and admirably well-served, the duke obtained a great advantage over Canalis. Modeste, who had received her riding-habit the evening before, spoke of places to ride to in the neighborhood. Through a turn which the conversation took, she was led to manifest a desire to see a hunt, a pleasure which was unknown to her. Immediately the duke proposed to give Mademoiselle Mignon the sight of a hunt in one of the forests of the Crown, distant some leagues from Havre. Thanks to his relations with the Prince de Cadignan, Master of the Hounds, he saw the means of displaying before Modeste's eyes a royal pageant, of captivating her by showing her the fascinating court life and of making her desire to enter it through her marriage. The glances which were exchanged between the duke and the two Mesdemoiselles d'Hérouville, said plainly, "the heiress is ours," so that the poet who detected them, and who possessed only his personal splendors, hastened to obtain a pledge of affection. Almost frightened at having gone farther than she intended with the d'Hérouvilles, Modeste, when she walked in the park after dinner, chose to go with Melchior a little in advance of the company. Through a young girl's curiosity, which was quite legitimate, she permitted Canalis to divine the calumnies

which Hélène had told her, and upon an exclamation from him, she asked him the secret which he promised to tell her.

"These stabs of the tongue," he said, "are fair play in the great world. Your uprightness is shocked by it,—and I,—I laugh at it. I am even happy over it. These ladies must believe the interests of his lordship are in great danger, to have recourse to such things."

And profiting at once by the advantage which a communication of this kind gives, Canalis used as his justification, such a spirit of pleasantry, and a passion so ingenuously expressed in thanking Modeste for a confidence in which he ventured to find a little love, that she found herself just as much compromised with the poet as with the Grand Equerry. Canalis, feeling the necessity of being bold, declared himself openly. He made vows to Modeste in which his poetry beamed forth as the moon, cleverly invoked for the occasion, in which shone out the description of the beauty of this lovely blond, who was charmingly dressed for the family fête. This pretended exaltation to which the evening, the foliage, the heavens and the earth, all nature, served as accomplices, carried this covetous lover beyond all reason; for he spoke of his disinterestedness and he understood by the charms of his style how to rejuvenate the famous theme by Diderot of "Sophie and fifteen hundred francs," of "Love in a cottage," like all lovers who well know the father-in-law's pocket-book.

"Monsieur," said Modeste, after having enjoyed the melody of this concerto, so admirably executed, *upon a well-known theme,* "the liberty which my parents allow me has permitted me to listen to you; but it is them to whom you must address yourself."

"Well," exclaimed Canalis, "tell me that if I obtain their consent, you will ask nothing better than to obey them."

"I know beforehand," she replied, "that my father has some fancies which may annoy the just pride of an old house like your own, for he wishes to see his title and his name borne by his grandsons."

"Ah! dear Modeste, what sacrifices would not one make to confide his life to such a guardian angel as yourself."

"You will not expect me to decide the fate of all my life in an instant," she said as she joined the d'Hérouville ladies again.

At this moment, these two noblewomen were caressing the vanity of the little Latournelle in order to use him for their interests. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, to whom, in order to distinguish her from her niece Hélène, the patrimonial name must be given, was telling the lawyer that the office of the President of the Court at Havre, which Charles X. would dispose of as she desired, was a retreat due to his legal talent and to his probity. Butscha, who walked with La Brière and who was frightened at the progress of the audacious Melchior, found the opportunity to speak with Modeste for a few

moments at the foot of the flight of steps, at the moment when the party were re-entering the house to give themselves up to the torments of the inevitable whist.

"Mademoiselle, I hope that you have not yet said 'Melchior' to him?" he said to her in a low voice.

"Very nearly, my mysterious dwarf!" she replied with a smile that would drive an angel to perdition.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the clerk as he let his hands fall and touch the steps.

"Well, is he not worth more than this hateful and solemn secretary in whom you take such an interest?" she continued, assuming towards Ernest one of those haughty airs, the secret of which belongs only to young girls, as if their virginity lent them wings to fly so high. "Would your little Monsieur de la Brière accept me without a dowry?" she said after a pause.

"Ask monsieur your father," replied Butscha, who took a few steps in order to lead Modeste a respectable distance from the windows. "Listen to me, mademoiselle. You know that he who is speaking to you is ready to give you not only his life but his honor for all time, at any moment. Therefore you may believe in him, and you may confide in him what, perhaps, you would not say to your father. Well, has this sublime Canalis spoken to you in a disinterested way, which makes you throw this reproach in poor Ernest's face?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe it?"

"You bad clerk," she replied, giving him one of the ten or twelve nicknames which she had found for him. "That question has the appearance of doubting the power of my self-esteem."

"You are laughing, my dear mademoiselle; therefore there is nothing serious and I hope then that you are making fun of him."

"What would you think of me, Monsieur Butscha, if I allow myself to laugh at any of those who do me the honor to wish me for a wife? Understand, Master Jean, that even in appearing to despise the most despicable homage, a young girl is always flattered by it.—"

"Do I then flatter you?" asked the clerk, showing his face illumined as a city for a celebration.

"You?" she said. "You show me the most precious of all friendships, a sentiment as disinterested as that of a mother for a daughter! Do not compare yourself to anyone, for even my father is obliged to devote himself to me."

She paused.

"I cannot say that I love you in the sense that men give to that word, but that which I grant you is everlasting and will know no change."

"Well," said Butscha, who pretended to pick up a pebble in order to kiss the tip of Modeste's shoe, leaving on it a tear, "let me then watch over you as a dragon does over a treasure. The poet has just unfolded before you the lace-work of his precious phrases, the tinsel of his promises. He has sung his love upon the string of his lyre, has he not?

If, as soon as this noble lover should have the certainty of your small fortune, you should see him change his conduct and become embarrassed and cold, would you still make him your husband; would you always give him your esteem?"

"Would not that be a Francisque Althor?" she asked, with a gesture in which there was bitter disgust.

"Allow me the pleasure of producing this change of decoration," said Butscha. "Not only do I believe that I can do this, but afterwards I do not despair of returning your poet to you, again in love, and of making him alternately blow hot and cold upon your heart as graciously as he sustains the *for* and *against* in the same evening, without even finding it out."

"If you are right," she said, "to whom must I trust myself?"

"To him who truly loves you."

"To the little duke?"

Butscha looked at Modeste. They both took a few steps together in silence. The young girl was inscrutable; not even a frown betrayed her.

"Mademoiselle, allow me to be the translator of the thoughts crouching at the bottom of your heart, like the sea-mosses under the water, and which you do not wish to explain to yourself."

"So, then," said Modeste, "my intimate-private-present-counselor would be also a mirror?"

"No, but an echo," he replied, accompanying these words with a gesture full of sublime humility.

"The duke loves you, but he loves you too much. If I have understood well, I the dwarf, the infinite delicacy of your heart, it would be repugnant to you to be adored like a holy sacrament in its tabernacle. But as you are eminently a woman, you would no more desire to see a man incessantly at your feet, of whom you would be eternally sure, than you would desire an egotist like Canalis, who would prefer himself to you.—Why? I know nothing about it. I will make myself a woman, and an old woman, to know the reason of this plan which I have read in your eyes, and which is, perhaps, that of all young girls. Nevertheless, you have in your great soul a yearning for adoration. When a man is at your knees, you could not put yourself at his. 'One cannot go far thus,' said Voltaire. The little duke has too many genuflections in his moral nature, and Canalis not enough; I might say none at all. Therefore, do I divine the maliciousness hidden in your smiles when you address the Grand Equerry, when he talks to you, when you reply to him. You could never be unhappy with the duke. All the world will approve if you choose him for a husband; but you will not love him at all. The coldness of egotism and the excessive warmth of a continual ecstasy produce without doubt a negative in the heart of all women. Evidently it is not this perpetual triumph that will lavish on you the infinite delights of marriage of which you dream, where one meets with obedience that makes one proud, where one makes great and little hidden sacrifices with

joy, where one feels anxieties without cause, where one hopes for success with madness, where one bows with joy before unexpected greatness, where one is understood even to her secrets, where sometimes a woman protects with her love, her protector.—"

"You are a sorcerer!" said Modeste.

"You will not find that tender equality of sentiments, that continual division of life and that assurance of pleasing which makes marriage acceptable, in marrying Canalis, a man who thinks only of himself, whose *I* is the sole note, whose attention does not stoop sufficiently to give ear to your father or to the Grand Equerry!—An ambitious man of the second order, to whom your dignity and your obedience would be of little importance, who would make of you a thing necessary in his house, and who insults you already by his indifference in the matter of honor. Yes, if you were to slap your mother's face, Canalis would shut his eyes to be able to deny your crime to himself, he is so greedy for your fortune. Therefore, mademoiselle, I am thinking neither of the great poet, who is only a little comedian, nor of his lordship, who could be for you only a fine marriage, and not a husband.—"

"Butscha, my heart is a blank book, where you inscribe yourself what you are reading there," replied Modeste. "You are carried away by your provincial hatred against everything which forces you to look higher than your head. You do not pardon the poet for being a man of politics, for

possessing a fine eloquence, for having a great future, and you slander his intentions."

"He, mademoiselle?—He would turn his back upon you at daybreak to-morrow, with the cowardice of a Vilquin."

"Oh, make him play this comedy, and—"

"Indeed I will, upon every strain, in three days. Wednesday, remember. Until then, mademoiselle, amuse yourself listening to all the airs of this mechanical chanter, so that the vile discords of the counterpart may show the better for it."

Modeste re-entered the drawing-room gaily, where alone of all the men, La Brière, seated in the window recess, where without doubt he had been looking at his idol, rose as if some usher had cried out "The Queen!" It was a respectful movement, full of that quick eloquence appropriate to a gesture, and which surpassed that of the finest speech. Love by words is not worth so much as love by actions, and all young girls of twenty years should have the wisdom of fifty to understand this axiom. Therein lies the most seductive argument. Instead of looking at Modeste in her full face as did Canalis, who greeted her with public homage, the disdained lover followed her with a long look askance, humble, after the manner of Butscha, almost timorous. The young heiress noticed this look as she went to place herself near Canalis, in whose game she appeared to interest herself. During the conversation, La Brière learned by a word from Modeste to her father that on Wednesday she would commence

her horseback riding; and she observed to him that she needed a whip in keeping with the magnificence of her riding-habit. The secretary cast a glance which sparkled like fire, at the dwarf, and some moments later they were both walking upon the terrace.

"It is nine o'clock," said Ernest to Butscha. "I start for Paris at full speed and I can be there to-morrow morning at ten o'clock. My dear Butscha, from you she will accept a remembrance, for she is friendly to you. Let me give her in your name a whip and know that the reward of this immense kindness will be that in me you will have not only a friend but devotion—"

"Go, you are indeed fortunate," said the clerk. "You have money, you!—"

"Let Canalis know that I shall not return home, and that he must invent a pretext to justify my two days' absence."

One hour later, Ernest set out in the mail-coach and arrived at Paris in twelve hours, where his first care was to retain a place in the post-wagon for Havre for the following day. Then he went to three of the most celebrated jewelers of Paris to compare whip handles, seeking the most royally beautiful that art could offer. He found a fox-hunt carved in gold and surmounted by a ruby, at an exorbitant price for the income of a secretary, and which had been made by Stidmann for a Russian lady who could not pay for it after having ordered it. All his savings went into it, for it was a matter

of seven thousand francs. Ernest gave the design of the coat-of-arms of La Bastie instead of that which was already there, and allowed twenty hours for the work. This carved handle, a masterpiece of delicacy, was affixed to a rubber whip and put into a red morocco case lined with velvet, upon which were marked two M's interlaced. La Brière arrived by the post on Wednesday morning in time to breakfast with Canalis. The poet had concealed his secretary's absence, saying that he was busy with some work sent from Paris. Butscha, who was at the post to offer his hand to the auditor on the arrival of the coach, ran to carry to Françoise Cochet this work of art, and asked her to place it upon Modeste's toilet table.

"You will doubtless accompany Mademoiselle Modeste upon her ride," said the clerk, who went to Canalis's house to announce to Ernest by a wink that the whip had reached its destination satisfactorily.

"I?" asked Ernest. "No, I am going to bed.—"

"Ah, bah!" exclaimed Canalis, looking at his friend. "I do not understand you any longer."

They went to breakfast and naturally the poet asked the clerk to sit with them. Butscha remained, intending to have himself invited, if necessary, by La Brière. He had seen on Germain's face the success of a malicious trick which would seem to anticipate his promise to Modeste.

"Monsieur would indeed do well to keep Monsieur Latournelle's clerk," said Germain in Canalis's ear.

Canalis and Germain went into the salon, at a wink from the servant to his master.

"This morning, monsieur, I went to see some fishing, with a party proposed yesterday by the master of a bark whose acquaintance I have made."

Germain did not acknowledge that he had had the bad taste to play billiards in a café at Havre where Butscha had surrounded him with his friends to act at will upon him.

"Well?" said Canalis. "To the point, quickly."

"Monsieur le Baron, I heard a discussion about Monsieur Mignon which I pushed to my utmost, as no one knew to whom I belonged. Ah! Monsieur le Baron, the talk of the world is that you have got yourself into a trap. The fortune of Mademoiselle de la Bastie is like her name, very modest. The ship upon which the father returned is not his, but belongs to the Chinese merchants to whom he must faithfully give an account. On this subject some things not very flattering to the colonel's honor are said. Having heard it said that you and Monsieur le Duc are disputing for Mademoiselle de la Bastie, I have taken the liberty to forewarn you; for of you two it were better that it should be his lordship to *snap her up.*—As I returned, I made a turn on the quay, before the theatre where the merchants were walking, among whom I could worm myself about boldly. These good fellows, seeing a well-dressed man, began to talk about Havre; from one thing to another I led them upon the subject of Colonel Mignon, and they agreed so well with the fishermen,

that I should fail in my duty were I silent. That is the reason that I left monsieur to dress himself, to rise alone,—"

"What shall I do?" exclaimed Canalis, finding himself so engaged as to be unable to retract his promises to Modeste.

"Monsieur knows my attachment," said Germain, seeing the poet look as if he were thunderstruck, "and he will not be astonished to see me give him some advice. If you could get this clerk intoxicated he would tell the very last fact, and if he does not open his heart at the second bottle of champagne, all will be well at the third. It would be strange indeed if monsieur,—whom, doubtless, we shall see some day an ambassador, as Philoxène has heard it said to Madame la Duchesse,—does not succeed with a clerk of Havre."

At this moment, Butscha, the unknown author of the fishing party, asked the auditor to be silent upon the subject of his trip to Paris and not to meddle with his manœuvres at table.

*

The clerk had made use of an unfavorable reaction against Charles Mignon which had begun to operate in Havre. On these grounds: The Comte de la Bastie had left in complete forgetfulness some of his former friends who, during his absence, had forgotten his wife and daughters. On hearing that he intended to give a grand dinner at the Mignon villa each one flattered himself that he would be invited, but when they learned that only Gobenheim, the Latournelles, the duke, and the two Parisians were invited, a clamor arose against the pride of the merchant; his affectation in not seeing any one and not going down to Havre, was observed and attributed to a feeling of contempt for Havre for having questioned his sudden accession to fortune. Thus gossip soon went so far as to say that the funds necessary to redeem the property from Vilquin had been furnished by Dumay. This allowed those most bitter against him to say calumniously that Charles had made over a great deal of his property to Dumay to save it from the claims of his associates in Canton. The few words of Charles, who had always intended to conceal his fortune, the whisperings of the people on what they heard, gave a semblance of truth to these gross fables, which each believed with that spirit of slander which merchants use against each other.

Just in the proportion that half-hearted patriotism toward one of the founders of Havre boasted of his immense fortune, the jealousy of the provincials diminished it. Butscha asked the fishermen, who were indebted to him for many favors, to keep the secret and use their tongues in his service; which they did well. The captain of the bark told Germain that one of his cousins, a sailor, had come from Marseilles where he had just left the brig which brought the colonel home. The brig was sold in the name of Castagnould, and the cargo, according to his cousin's statement, was not worth more than three or four hundred thousand francs.

"Germain," said Canalis, just as the valet was leaving the room, "serve us champagne and Bordeaux. A member of the bar of Normandy must have a souvenir of a poet's hospitality—Besides, he has the wit of *Figaro*," said Canalis, leaning on the dwarf's shoulder, "and this wit must be sharpened and brightened with champagne. You and I will not spare the wine—neither will Ernest. My faith, it has been well-nigh two years since I was drunk," he added, looking at La Brière.

"With wine? I can believe that," said the clerk. "You must get drunk every day with yourself. You quaff direct the cup of praise. Ah! you are handsome, you are a poet, you are famous in your lifetime, you have the power of conversation as great as your genius, and you please all women, even my master's wife. Beloved by the most beautiful Sultana Validé that I ever saw—I never

saw but her—you can if you wish wed Mademoiselle de la Bastie.—See here, only to enumerate your present advantages, to say nothing of the future—a title, peerage, embassy!—is enough to intoxicate me, like men who bottle other men's wine."

"All these social distinctions," said Canalis, "count for little without the one thing needful—fortune. We are all men here and can talk freely. Fine sentiments do very well in verse."

"And depend upon circumstances," said the clerk with a significant gesture.

"But, you maker of contracts," said the poet, smiling at the interruption, "you know as well as I do, that *cottage* rhymes with *pottage*."

At table, Butscha played the rôle of Rigaudin in the *Maison en loterie* in a way which almost frightened Ernest, as he did not know the frolics of an office, which are equal to those of the studio. The clerk recounted the scandalous stories of Havre, the gossip about fortunes, those of the boudoir and the crimes committed code in hand which are called in Normandy "getting out of a tight place as best you can." He spared no one, and his spirits increased as he poured down his throat torrents of wine, like rain down a gutter.

"Do you know, La Brière, that this brave fellow would make a famous secretary to the embassy?" said Canalis.

"And push out his chief," cried the dwarf, throwing Canalis a glance, the insolence of which was drowned in the fizzing of carbonic acid gas. "I

have little enough gratitude and plenty of intrigue to mount by your shoulders. A poet carrying a hunchback!—that has been seen before to-day and very often, too—on the bookshelves. Come, you look at me as a sword swallower. Ah! my dear great genius, you are a superior man, you know very well that gratitude is a silly word, which is put in the dictionary, but is not in the human heart. Gratitude is worth nothing except on a certain mount which is neither Pindus nor Parnassus. Do you think I owe anything to my master's wife who brought me up? Of course not; the whole village has evened that account in esteem, praise, and admiration—the best of coin. I do not acknowledge any good which is only the reward of self-love. Men make a commerce of their favors, the word gratitude indicates a debit balance—that is all. As to schemes, they are my divinity.—What!" he said in answer to a gesture of Canalis, "do you not admire the faculty which enables a politic man to get ahead of a man of genius; when it demands the constant observation of his vices, the weaknesses of his superiors and the knowledge of the propitious moment to act? Ask the diplomat if his greatest successes are not the triumph of skill over force? If I were your secretary, Monsieur le Baron, you would soon be prime minister because it would be to my interest for you to be. See! would you like a proof of my little talents of this kind? Listen! you love desperately Mademoiselle Modeste and you are right. That child has my fullest esteem, she is

a true Parisian. Sometimes, here and there, you find Parisians in the provinces. Our Modeste is just the woman to push a man along—she has it in her," he said with a turn of his finger in the air. "You have a dangerous rival in the duke: what will you give me to make him leave Havre in three days?"

"Let us finish the bottle," said the poet, filling up Butscha's glass.

"You are going to make me drunk!" said the clerk, gulping down his ninth glass of champagne. "Have you a bed where I could get an hour's sleep? My master is as sober as the camel that he is, and Madame Latournelle also. One or the other of them would scold me, and rightly, too, if I take more —I have some deeds to draw."

Then, taking up his previous ideas after the fashion of a drunken man, he exclaimed:

"And such a memory! it is equal to my gratitude."

"Butscha," cried the poet, "just now you said that you had no gratitude, now you contradict yourself."

"Not at all," replied the clerk. "To forget is almost always to remember! Come now! I am just cut out for a famous secretary—"

"What means would you take to get rid of the duke?" asked Canalis, charmed to have the conversation take this turn.

"That—that does not concern you!" said the dwarf, pretending to hiccough.

Butscha rolled his head on his shoulders and turned his eyes from Germain to La Brière, from La Brière to Canalis, after the manner of a man who begins to feel himself intoxicated and wishes to know if others have observed it; for, in the shipwreck of drunkenness it is noticeable that self-love is the only sentiment which floats.

"I say! my great poet, you are not a bad joker yourself! You take me, then, for one of your readers, you who sent your friend to Paris post haste to inquire into the fortune of the Mignons—I trick, thou trickest, we trick—Good! But do me the honor to believe that I am smart enough to always appear to have the necessary amount of conscience in its place. In my vocation of head clerk to master Latournelle my heart is a box, padlocked!—My mouth never lets out anything about a client. I know everything and I know nothing. Besides, my passion is well known. I love Modeste, she is my scholar, and she must make a fine marriage.—And I will send away the duke if need be and you can marry—"

"Germain, coffee and liqueurs!—" said Canalis.

"Liqueurs?" repeated Butscha, raising his hand like a pretended virgin who resists a seduction. "Ah! my poor deeds!—there was a marriage-contract among them. There! my second clerk is as stupid as a matrimonial provision and is capable of p—p—putting his penknife through the clause as to the bride's paraphernalia. He thinks he is a handsome man because he is five feet six—the idiot!"

"Here is some *crème de thé*, a liqueur of the Indies," said Canalis. "You, whom Mademoiselle Modeste consults—"

"She consults me—"

"Well, do you think that she loves me?" asked the poet.

"More than she loves the duke," replied the dwarf, arousing himself from a sort of stupor which he acted wonderfully well. "She loves you on account of your disinterestedness. She told me, in speaking of you, that she was prepared to make the greatest sacrifices, to economize in dress, and not to spend more than a thousand crowns a year, and to employ her life in proving to you that you had done well to marry her. She is devilishly good—hiccough—bless you! and well-informed, she knows everything,—that girl does."

"And she has three hundred thousand francs," said Canalis.

"Oh! it is perhaps as much as that," replied the enthusiastic clerk. "Papa Mignon,—you see he is mignon as father as well as in name—that is why I like him,—he would give up anything to marry his only daughter well.—The colonel is accustomed since your Restoration (hiccough) to live on half pay, and he would be content to live with Dumay on little or nothing in Havre if he could get together three hundred thousand francs for the little one.—But do not let us forget that Dumay's fortune is destined for Modeste. Dumay, you know, is a Breton, and his very origin guarantees a fulfilment

of his undertaking, he never retracts his word and his fortune equals that of the colonel. Nevertheless, as they take my advice as much as you, although I do not talk so much or so well, I told them 'You sink too much in that house; if Vilquin goes back on you there are two hundred thousand francs which bring you in nothing. Then there are only one hundred thousand francs left to get along on and that is not enough, take my word for it.' Then the colonel and Dumay consulted together. Believe me, though, Modeste is rich. The people on the quay talk a lot of nonsense, but they are jealous. Who else in the department has such a *dot?*" said Butscha, counting on his fingers. "Two or three hundred thousand francs in ready money," said he bending back the thumb of his left hand with the first finger of his right, "that is one! The property of the Mignon villa," touching the second finger—"*Tertio*, the Dumay fortune!" he added, doubling down the third finger. "Ah! little mother, Modeste will have her six hundred thousand francs when the two soldiers get their marching orders from the Eternal Father."

This naïve and coarse confidence intermingled with glasses of liqueurs, sobered Canalis as much as it seemed to intoxicate Butscha. For the clerk, a young countryman, this fortune was evidently colossal. His head fell into the palm of his right hand and with his elbows placed majestically on the table he blinked his eyes and went on talking to himself.

"In twenty years to come, according to that Code which piles up the fortunes under the title of 'Successions,' an heiress of six hundred thousand francs will be as rare as disinterestedness is among usurers. You will say that Modeste can well spend twelve thousand francs a year, the interest on her *dot*, well she is so sweet—so sweet—so sweet—She is, do you see—to a poet metaphors are necessary—she is a weasel, as mischievous as a monkey."

"Why did you tell me, then, that she had six millions?" cried Canalis in a low tone, glancing at La Brière.

"My friend," said Ernest, "I ought not to say anything, I am bound by an oath, and perhaps, I ought not to say even that—"

"An oath to whom—?"

"To Monsieur Mignon,"

"How is this, Ernest? You who know how necessary fortune is to me."

Butscha snored.

"You who know my position, who know all that I shall lose in the Rue de Grenelle by this attempt to marry, you could coolly let me ruin myself—" said Canalis turning pale. "This was an affair of friendship, my dear fellow; a compact entered into long before this one which the crafty Provençal Mignon asked of you."

"My dear fellow," said Ernest, "I love Modeste too much to—"

"Fool! then take her," cried the poet. "Break your oath—"

"You swear to me on your word of honor to forget what I am going to tell you and to act toward me, whatever happens, as if this confidence had never been made?"

"I swear it by the memory of my mother."

"Well then," said La Brière, "Monsieur Mignon told me at Paris that he was far from having the colossal fortune of which the Mongenods spoke to me. The colonel's intention is to give two hundred thousand francs to his daughter. Now, Melchior, was the father distrustful? was he sincere? That question is not for me to answer. If she deigns to choose me, Modeste will be my wife even if she has no dot."

"A blue stocking! educated enough to ruin her, a girl who has read everything, who knows everything—in theory that is," exclaimed Canalis at a gesture of La Brière, "a spoiled child raised in the lap of luxury and then deprived of it for five years! —Ah! my poor friend, think well of it.—"

"Ode and code!" said Butscha waking up, "you make odes, I make codes, and there is only the difference of a C between us. Now, code comes from *coda,* a tail! You have refreshed me and I love you —do not go to making codes. Here, I will give you a piece of good advice for your wine and your crème de the. Father Mignon is cream too—the cream of honest men. All right, get on your horse, he is going to accompany his daughter and you can talk frankly to him of the *dot,* he will reply candidly and you will get at the truth of the matter as true

as I am drunk and you are a great man, but anyway, we are going to leave Havre together, are we not? I will be your secretary, as this little fellow who thinks that I am drunk and is laughing at me, will leave you. Come, let's go! and leave him to marry the girl."

Canalis got up to go and dress himself.

"Hush! not a word! he is hastening to commit suicide," said Butscha soberly to La Brière, and as cool as Gobenheim, he made a gesture to Canalis familiar to the Paris gamins. "Adieu! my grand master," cried the clerk at the top of his voice, "will you allow me to sleep off the fumes in that kiosk of Madame Amaury?"

"Make yourself at home," replied the poet.

Butscha gained the kiosk, much to the amusement of three of Canalis's servants as he walked over the flower-beds and around the vases of flowers with the curious grace of an insect which describes its interminable zigzags, in trying to go out of a closed window. When he had shut himself in the kiosk and the servants had gone into the house, he sat down on a painted wooden bench and abandoned himself to the delights of his triumph. He had just fooled a great man, he had not only torn away his mask, but he had seen him untie the knots and he laughed as an author over his own piece, that is to say, with a sense of the immense value of his *vis comica*.

"Men are like tops," he cried, "you have only to find the string to wind them with. Should

l not faint away if any one came to me saying: 'Mademoiselle Modeste has just fallen from her horse and broken her leg!'"

Some moments later, Modeste, dressed in a beautiful riding-habit of bottle-green cashmere, with a small green hat and veil, buckskin gloves and velvet boots, upon which fluttered the lace of her undergarments, and mounted on a richly-caparisoned pony, showed to her father and the Duc d'Hérouville the pretty present which she had received; she was delighted with it, as it was one of those attentions which flatter women highly.

"Is this from you, Monsieur le Duc?" she said, extending to him the sparkling end of the whip. A card was with it which read "Guess if you can," and interrogation points. "Françoise and Madame Dumay attribute this charming surprise to Butscha, but my dear Butscha is not rich enough to pay for such beautiful rubies! But my father, to whom I remember saying Sunday evening that I had no whip, has sent to Rouen for this one for me."

Modeste pointed to a whip in her father's hand, the end of which was studded with turquoises, then the fashion but since become very common.

"I would give ten years of my old age, mademoiselle, to have the right to offer you this magnificent jewel," replied the duke, courteously.

"Ah! here is the audacious man!" exclaimed Modeste, as she saw Canalis approaching on horseback. "It is only a poet who knows how to find such pretty things—Monsieur," she said to

Melchior, "my father will scold you, and you give justification to those who reproach you here with extravagance."

"Ah!" exclaimed Canalis, artlessly, "that, then, is why La Brière went from Havre to Paris at full speed!"

"Your secretary has taken such liberties?" said Modeste growing pale and throwing her whip to Françoise Cochet with a gesture in which could be read profound contempt. "Return this whip, father, for me."

"Poor fellow, he is lying on his bed half-dead from fatigue!" replied Melchior as he followed the young girl who had dashed off at a gallop. "You are hard, mademoiselle. 'I,' he said to me, 'have only this chance to recall myself to her memory.'"

"And would you esteem a woman who was capable of keeping remembrances from half the parish?" asked Modeste.

Modeste, surprised at not receiving any reply from Canalis, attributed this inattention to the noise of the horses' feet.

"How you delight to torment those who love you!" said the duke to her. "This nobleness and pride contradict so well your faults, that I begin to suspect you slander yourself in premeditating your naughtiness."

"Ah! you have just found it out, Monsieur le Duc," she said with a laugh. "You have the clear-sightedness of a husband!"

They went almost a kilometer in silence.

Modeste was astonished not to receive the burning glances of Canalis, who appeared a little too much taken with the beauties of the landscape for this admiration to be natural. The evening before, Modeste pointing out to the poet an admirable effect of the sunset on the sea, had said to him upon finding him as stupefied as a deaf person:

"Well, do you not see it?"

"I see only your hand," he had replied.

"Does Monsieur la Brière know how to ride?" asked Modeste of Canalis to tease him.

"Not very well, but he rides," replied the poet, who had become as cold as Gobenheim before the colonel's return.

Along the route of a cross-road which Monsieur Mignon took to go by a pretty valley to a hill which crowned the course of the Seine, Canalis allowed Modeste and the duke to pass, restraining his horse's pace in a way to be able to keep company with the colonel.

"Monsieur le Comte, you are a straightforward military man, so no doubt you will see a claim to your esteem in my frankness. When propositions of marriage, with all their savage,—or if you will,—too civilized discussions, pass through the mouth of a third party, everyone loses by it. We are both of us gentlemen, one as discreet as the other, and you have, like myself, overcome the age of surprises; therefore, let us speak as good comrades. I will give you the example. I am twenty-nine years old, I am without landed fortune, and I am

ambitious. Mademoiselle Modeste pleases me exceedingly, you must have noticed it. Now, notwithstanding the faults which your dear child gives herself at pleasure—"

"Without counting those which she has," said the colonel smiling.

"I would very gladly make her my wife, and I believe I could make her happy. The question of fortune is of all importance to my future, which is to-day being agitated. But, in spite of everything, all young girls in marrying expect to be loved. Nevertheless, you are not the man to wish to marry your dear Modeste without a dowry, and my situation would no more permit me to make a so-called marriage of love than to take a wife who would not bring a fortune at least equal to my own. I have salaries from my sinecures, the Academy, and the receipts from my publishers, about thirty thousand francs a year, an enormous fortune for a bachelor. If my wife and I, together, have sixty thousand francs income, I should be in the same condition of life as I am now. Shall you give a million to Mademoiselle Modeste?"

"Ah! monsieur, you are very far from the amount," said the colonel, jesuitically.

"Let us suppose then," replied Canalis eagerly, "that instead of talking, we have whistled. You will be satisfied with my behavior, Monsieur le Comte; I shall be included among those unfortunate beings whom this charming girl has refused. Give me your word to keep silence to everyone, even to

Mademoiselle Modeste, for," he added as a bit of consolation, "such a change in my position might take place that it would allow me to ask her of you without dowry."

"I promise you," said the colonel. "You know, monsieur, with what bombast the provincial public, like that of Paris, talks of the fortunes which are made and unmade. Happiness and misfortune are equally magnified; we are never as unhappy nor as happy as we are thought to be. In commerce, there is no security except the capital placed in landed property, after all bills are paid. I await with great impatience the reports of my agents. The sale of my merchandise and of my vessel, and the settling of my accounts in China;—nothing is finished. I shall not know my fortune for ten months. Nevertheless, at Paris I guaranteed two hundred thousand francs dowry to Monsieur de la Brière and in ready cash. I wish to establish an entailed estate and assure the future of my grandchildren in obtaining for them the transmission of my arms and titles."

Canalis had not listened to this reply after the opening sentence. The four riders, finding themselves in a road broad enough, rode abreast and gained the plateau from whence the eye overlooked the rich basin of the Seine, toward Rouen, while on the other horizon the sea could still be seen.

"Butscha was right, I believe. God is a great landscape painter," said Canalis, as he contemplated this point of view, unique among those which

MODESTE AND CANALIS

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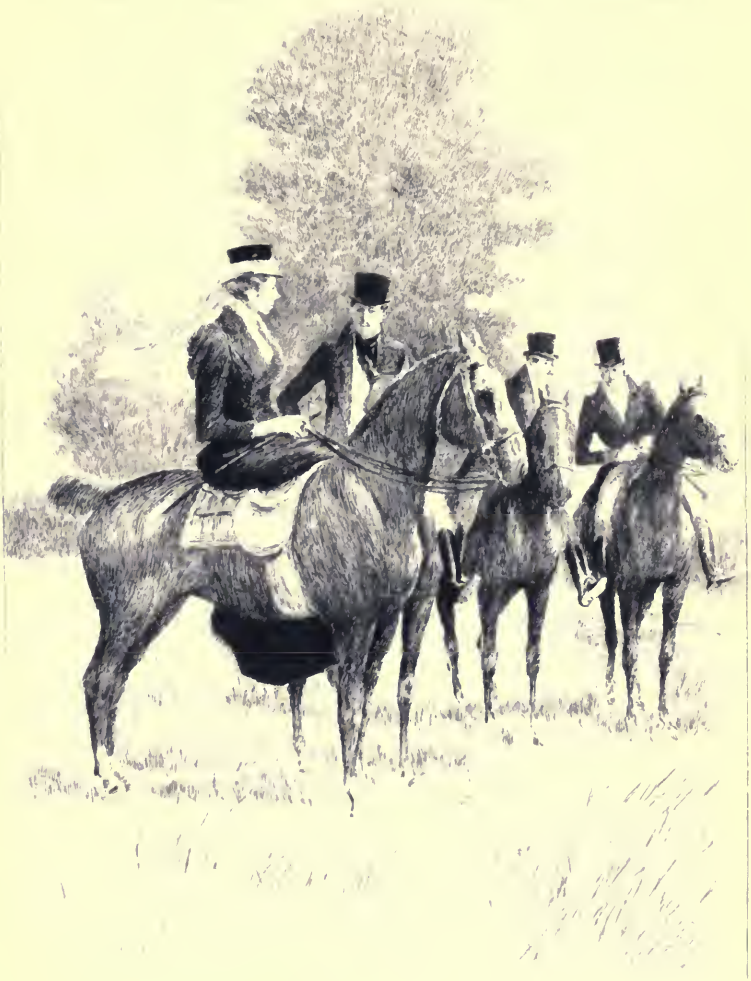
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make the borders of the Seine so justly celebrated.

"It is especially true at the hunt, my dear baron," replied the duke, "when Nature is animated by a voice, by a tumult in the silence, that the landscapes seen rapidly then, appear truly sublime in their changing effects."

"The sun is an inexhaustible palette," said Modeste, looking at the poet in a kind of stupefaction.

At a remark from Modeste upon Canalis's absent-mindedness, he replied that he was absorbed in his own thoughts, an excuse that authors give oftener than other men.

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"And perhaps conceived in attics," replied the colonel.

After having cast a searching glance on Canalis which he could not endure, Modeste heard the sound of bells; she looked solemnly before her and exclaimed in an icy tone:

"Ah! to-day is Wednesday!"

"It is not to flatter the passing caprice of mademoiselle," said the Duc d'Hérouville, solemnly, to whom this scene, so tragic for Modeste, had allowed

time to think, "but I declare that I am so profoundly disgusted with society, with the Court and with Paris, that with a Duchesse d'Hérouville gifted with the graces and the mind of mademoiselle, I would promise to live as a philosopher in my château, doing good around me, draining my deltas and educating my children,—"

"That, Monsieur le Duc, shall be placed to your account," replied Modeste, as she rested her eyes for a long time on this noble gentleman. "You flatter me," she continued, "you do not think me frivolous, and you give me credit for resources enough in myself to live in solitude. Perhaps that is to be my fate," she added, looking at Canalis with an expression of pity.

"It is that of all mediocre fortunes," replied the poet. "Paris exacts a Babylonian luxury. At times I ask myself how I have had enough to get along there until now."

"The king can reply for us both," said the duke candidly, "for we live on his Majesty's bounty. If we had not been allowed since the fall of Monsieur le Grand, who is called Cinq-Mars, to keep his office in our family, we should have been obliged to sell Hérouville at auction. Ah! believe me, mademoiselle, it is a great humiliation for me to mix these financial questions with my marriage—"

The simplicity of this avowal coming from the heart, and in which the sorrow was sincere, touched Modeste.

"To-day," said the poet, "no one in France, Monsieur le Duc, is rich enough to be so mad as to marry a wife for her personal worth, for her graces, for her character, or for her beauty—"

The colonel looked at Canalis in a singular way, after having examined Modeste, whose face no longer showed any astonishment.

"For people of honor," then said the colonel, "it is a good employment for their wealth to destine it to repair the ravages of time in the old historical families."

"Yes, papa," replied the young girl gravely.

The colonel invited the duke and Canalis to dine with him, without ceremony, in their riding costumes, he, himself, giving them the example of a négligé costume.

When, upon her return, Modeste went to change her dress, she regarded with curiosity the jewel which had been brought from Paris and which she had so cruelly disdained.

"How beautifully work is done now!" she said to Françoise Cochet, who had become her maid.

"And this poor fellow, mademoiselle, who has a fever—"

"Who told you that?"

"Monsieur Butscha. He came to beg me to make you notice, what you have no doubt already observed, that he has kept his word with you on the promised day."

Modeste descended to the salon in a dress of royal simplicity.

"My dear father," she said in an audible voice, as she took the colonel by the arm, "go and enquire about Monsieur de la Brière, and take him, I beg you, his gift. You may allege that my small fortune, as well as my tastes, prevent me from carrying trifles which belong only to queens or courtesans. Besides, I can only accept gifts from a fiancé. Beg this fine fellow to keep the whip until you know if you are rich enough to purchase it of him."

"My little girl is full of good sense," said the colonel as he kissed Modeste's forehead.

Canalis took advantage of a conversation between the duke and Madame Mignon, to go on the terrace, where Modeste joined him drawn by curiosity, while he believed her led there by the desire to be Madame Canalis. Frightened by the imprudence with which he had just accomplished what military men call a wheel of the quarter circle, and which, according to the law of the ambitious, all men in his position would have made quite as abruptly, he sought for plausible reasons to give upon seeing the unfortunate Modeste approach.

"Dear Modeste," he said to her, assuming a wheedling tone, "will you be displeased upon the conditions in which we now stand, if I tell you how painful your replies to the remarks of Monsieur d'Hérouville are to a man who loves, but especially to a poet whose soul is like a woman's, nervous and full of the thousand jealousies of true passion? I should indeed be a poor diplomat if I had not divined that your first coquetries and your calculated

inconsistencies had for their reason, the study of our characters—"

Modeste raised her head with an intelligent movement, quick and coquettish, the type of which is perhaps only in animals with whom mistrust produces miracles of grace.

"Therefore when I returned home, I was no longer its dupe. I marveled at your delicacy, in harmony with your character and face. Be assured I have never supposed but that so much artificial duplicity was the covering of an adorable candor. No, your mind, your education, nothing has stolen that precious innocence that we ask in a wife. You are indeed the wife for a poet, a diplomat, a thinker; for a man destined to know doubtful situations in life, and I admire you as much as I feel attachment for you. I beg you, if you were not playing a comedy with me yesterday, when you accepted the faith of a man whose vanity will be changed into pride at seeing himself chosen by you, whose faults will become good qualities in the heavenly contact with you, do not wound these sentiments in him which amount almost to a sin—

"In my soul, jealousy is a solvent, and you have revealed to me all its power. It is fearful; it destroys everything there. Oh! it is not a question of the jealousy of Othello," he continued at a gesture from Modeste. "No! No!—It concerns myself! I am spoiled upon this point. You know the one affection to which I am indebted for the only happiness that I have enjoyed, incomplete, indeed, as

it is."—He raised his head.—"Love is described as a child among all nations, because he does not conceive himself unless all life is his—Well, this sentiment has its limitation, indicated by nature. It is still-born. The most ingenious maternity has divined, has calmed this sad point in my heart, for a woman who feels, who sees the joys of love die, has angelic tenderness. Therefore the duchess has never caused me the least suffering of this kind. In ten years there has never been a word or look to wound me. I attach to words, to thoughts, to looks, more value than ordinary persons accord to them. If to me a look is an immense treasure, the least suspicion is a deadly poison. It acts instantaneously. I no longer love. To my mind, and contrary to that of the crowd who love to tremble, hope and wait, love should reside in a perfect, childlike, infinite security.—For me the delicious purgatory that women like to make for us here below with their coquetry, is an atrocious happiness which I refuse; for me love is Heaven or Hell. Hell, I will not have it, and I feel within myself the strength to bear the eternal azure of Paradise. I give myself without reserve. I shall have neither secret, doubt nor deception in the life to come, and I ask reciprocity. I offend you, perhaps, in suspecting you! Believe that in this I speak to you only of myself—"

"Much, but it will never be too much," said Modeste, stabbed by all the stings of this discourse in which the Duchesse de Chaulieu served as a

dagger. "I am in the habit of admiring you, my dear poet."

"Well, can you promise me this dog-like fidelity which I offer you? Is it not beautiful? Is it not what you wish?"

"Why, dear poet, do you not seek in marriage a mute who is blind and a little foolish? I do not ask more than to please my husband in everything, but you threaten to deprive a girl of that especial happiness which you arrange for her, to take it from her at the slightest gesture, the slightest word, the slightest look! You cut the bird's wings and you wish to see it fly. I know well that poets are accused of inconsistency—Oh! unreservedly," she said, at a gesture of denial which Canalis made, "for this so-called fault is due to the fact that vulgar people do not take into account the rapidity of the actions of their minds. But I did not know that a man of genius would invent the contradictory conditions of a like game and would call it life! You ask the impossible in order to have the pleasure of finding me at fault, like the enchanters in fairy tales, who give tasks to persecute young girls whom good fairies succor."

"Here the fairy would be true love," said Canalis in a sharp tone, as he saw that his reason for being piqued had been divined by this fine and delicate mind which Butscha had guided so well.

"You resemble at this moment, dear poet, those parents who are anxious about the girl's dowry

before showing that of their son. You are squeamish with me, without knowing if you have the right to be. Love is not established by conventions, dryly discussed. The poor Duc d'Hérouville allows himself to act with the abandon of Uncle Toby in Sterne, with this difference merely: that I am not the Widow Wadman, although widowed of many illusions about poetry. Yes! we do not wish to believe anything, we young girls, of that which upsets our world of ideas. I was told all this in advance! Ah! you are making a bad quarrel with me, unworthy of you. I do not recognize the Melchior of yesterday."

"Because Melchior has recognized in you an ambition which you count still—"

Modeste looked at Canalis from head to toe with an imperial glance.

"But I shall some day be ambassador and peer of France, as well as he."

"You take me for a girl of the middle-class," she replied as she mounted the steps. But she turned quickly and added, losing her dignified air, she was so suffocated: "It is less impertinent than for you to take me for a fool. The change in your manners has its cause in the idle talk which is reported at Havre, and which Françoise, my maid, has just repeated to me."

"Ah! Modeste, can you believe that?" said Canalis, taking a dramatic pose. "You do not then imagine me capable of marrying you only for your fortune?"

"If I have done you that injustice after your edifying remarks on the borders of the Seine, you have only to undeceive me, and then I shall be all that you would wish me to be," she said, withering him with her disdain.

"If you think to catch me in this trap," said the poet to himself as he followed her, "you think me younger than I am. Must one then have so many ceremonies with a sly little person whose esteem is of no more importance to me than that of the King of Borneo? But in ascribing to me an unworthy sentiment, she gives good reason for my new attitude. Is she cunning!—La Brière will be saddled like a little fool that he is, and in five years we shall laugh well with her about him."

The coldness which this altercation had put between Canalis and Modeste was noticeable to all eyes in the evening. Canalis withdrew at an early hour, pleading La Brière's indisposition, and he left the field open to the Grand Equerry. Toward eleven o'clock, Butscha, who came for Madame Latournelle, said with a smile, very softly to Modeste:

"Was I right?"

"Alas! yes," she said.

"But did you, according to our agreement, leave the door partly open so that he would return?"

"My anger got the better of me," replied Modeste. "Such meanness made the blood go to my head and I gave him his dues."

"Well, so much the better! When you are both so much at variance as not to speak graciously any

more, I will take care to make him so in love and so importunate as to deceive even you."

"Come, now, Butscha, he is a great poet, a gentleman and a man of spirit."

"Your father's eight millions are more than all that."

"Eight millions?" said Modeste.

"My master, who is selling his practice, is going to leave for Provence in order to direct the acquisitions which Castagnould, your father's head man, proposes. The amount of the contracts to re-acquire the property of La Bastie reaches four millions and your father has consented to all the purchases. You have two millions for dowry and the colonel allows for your establishment at Paris, a house and furnishings!—Calculate for yourself."

"Ah! I can be the Duchesse d'Hérouville," said Modeste looking at Butscha.

"If it had not been for this comedian, Canalis, you would have kept *his* whip as coming from me," said the clerk, thus pleading La Brière's cause.

"Monsieur Butscha, would you then, have me marry, at hazard, to suit you?" said Modeste with a laugh.

"This worthy fellow loves as much as I do. You have loved him for a week, and *he* is a man of heart," replied the clerk.

"And can he then compete with an office of the Crown? There are only six of them: Grand Almoner, Chancellor, Grand Chamberlain, Grand

Master, Constable, Grand Admiral, but the Constables are no longer so named."

"In six months the people, mademoiselle, who are composed of an infinite number of bad Butschas, may blow down all these grandeurs, and besides, what does nobility signify to-day? There are not a thousand true gentlemen in France. The Hérouvilles spring from a verger of Robert of Normandy. You would, indeed, have many vexations with those two old maids with wrinkled faces! If you insist upon the title of duchess, you are of Avignon and the Pope surely would have as much regard for you as for the merchants, and he will sell you some duchy ending in *nia* or *agno*. Do not stake your happiness against an office of the Crown!"

*

Canalis's reflections during the night were entirely positive. He saw nothing in the world worse for a man than to be married without fortune. Still trembling from the danger which his vanity, excited by Modeste, and the desire of snatching her away from the Duc d'Hérouville, and his belief in Monsieur Mignon's millions, had led him into, he asked himself what the Duchesse de Chaulieu must think of his stay at Havre, which had been aggravated by an epistolary silence of two weeks, when at Paris they wrote one another four or five letters a week.

"And the poor woman who is working to obtain for me the ribbon of the Commander of the Legion of Honor and the post of Minister at the court of the Grand Duke of Baden," he exclaimed.

Immediately with that rapidity of decision which with poets as with speculators, results from a quick intuition of the future, he sat at his table and composed the following letter:

TO THE DUCHESSE DE CHAULIEU

"My dear Eléonore,

"Without doubt you are astonished at not having heard from me yet, but the sojourn which I am making here has not had my health alone for a

motive, but it is a question of my repaying in some manner our little La Brière. This poor fellow has become much enamored of a certain Mademoiselle Modeste de la Bastie, a pale, insignificant, stringy little girl, who by the way, has the vice to love literature and calls herself a poetess to justify the caprices, the whims and the changes of a very bad disposition. You know Ernest, and he is so easy to captivate, that I have not wished to let him go alone. Mademoiselle de la Bastie has flirted strangely with your Melchior; she was much disposed to become your rival, although she has thin arms and small shoulders, like all young girls; hair more nondescript than that of Madame de Rochefide, and very suspicious little gray eyes. I called a halt, perhaps too cruelly, to the graciousness of this Immodest; but unique love is thus. What are the women of the earth to me beside you?

"The people with whom I pass my time and who form the accompaniment of the heiress, are so middle-class that they would make one sick. Pity me! I pass my evenings with lawyers' clerks, with lawyers' wives, cashiers, and a provincial usurer; and surely there is a vast difference between these and the evenings at the Rue de Grenelle. The pretended fortune of the father, who has returned from China, has obtained for us the presence of the everlasting wooer, the Grand Equerry, all the more eager for the millions, as it is said he needs six or seven of them to improve the famous swamp of Hérouville. The king does not know

how fatal is the present he made to the little duke! His Grace, who does not suspect the smallness of his desired father-in-law's fortune, is jealous only of me. La Brière is making his way near his idol under cover of his friend, who serves as a screen. In spite of Ernest's ecstasies, I, although a poet, think of the essentials; and the information which I have just learned concerning the fortune, darkens our secretary's future, whose fiancée has teeth of an edge disquieting for every kind of fortune. If my angel wishes to compensate for some of our sins, she will try to learn the truth of this matter, by causing Mongenod, his banker, to come to her and question him with the skill which characterizes her. Monsieur Charles Mignon, an old cavalry colonel of the Imperial Guard, has been for seven years a correspondent of the house of Mongenod. The talk is of two hundred thousand francs of dowry at the utmost, and I wish, before making the demand for Ernest, to have positive information. Once our friends are in accord, I shall return to Paris. I know how to finish everything to the advantage of our lover; it concerns the transmission of the title of count to Monsieur Mignon's son-in-law, and no one is more able than Ernest, on account of his services, to obtain this favor, especially seconded by us three, you, the duke and I. With his tastes, Ernest, who will readily become Master of Accounts, will be very happy at Paris to see himself at the head of twenty-five thousand francs a year, a permanent place, and a wife, the unhappy man!

"Ah! my dear, how I long to see once more the Rue de Grenelle! Two weeks of absence, when they do not destroy love, give it the ardor of its first days, and you know better than I, perhaps, the reasons which render my love eternal. My bones in the tomb will love you still!

"Therefore must I not be constant to it here? If I am forced to remain ten days longer, I shall go to Paris for some hours.

"Has the duke obtained anything with which to hang me? And, my dear life, will you not need to drink the waters at Baden next year? The cooings of our melancholy lover, compared to the accents of our happy love, always the same at every moment for almost ten years, have given me great contempt for marriage! And I have never seen these matters so closely. Ah! dear, that which is called a *fault,* unites two beings much more than the *law,* does it not?"

This idea served as a text for two pages of memories and hopes, a little too intimate to be allowed to be published.

The evening of the day before Canalis posted this epistle, Butscha, who replied under the name of Jean Jacmin to a letter from his pretended cousin, Philoxène, sent his reply twelve hours in advance of the poet's letter.

Most anxious for two weeks and wounded by Melchior's silence, the duchess, who had dictated Philoxène's letter to her cousin, had just learned

exact information concerning Colonel Mignon's fortune, after reading the reply of the clerk, a little too decisive for the self-love of a woman fifty years old. Seeing herself betrayed and abandoned for millions, Eléonore was a prey to a paroxysm of rage, of hatred and of cold wickedness. Philoxène knocked to enter her mistress' sumptuous chamber, and found her with her eyes full of tears, and remained stupefied at this phenomenon, without precedent, during the fifteen years she had served her.

"One expiates in ten minutes the happiness of ten years," exclaimed the duchess.

"A letter from Havre, madame."

Eléonore read the prose of Canalis, without noticing Philoxène's presence, whose astonishment grew in seeing serenity return to the duchess's face in proportion as she went on with the reading. Hold to a drowning man a stick as big as a cane, and he will see in it a royal highway. Thus the happy Eléonore believed in Canalis's good faith in reading these four pages in which love and business, truth and falsehood elbowed one another. She who, when the banker had left, had just commanded her husband to prevent Melchior's nomination, if there were still time, was taken by a sentiment of generosity which rose almost to the sublime.

"Poor fellow!" she thought, "he has not had the least evil thought. He loves me as at first. He has told me everything."

"Philoxène!" she said, seeing her waiting maid standing, apparently arranging the toilet table.

"Madame la Duchesse?"

"My hand-glass, child."

Eléonore looked at herself and saw the fine lines traced upon her forehead, and which disappeared at a distance. She sighed, and by that sigh she bade farewell to love. Then she conceived one of those strong thoughts outside of the pettinesses of women, a thought which intoxicates for some moments, and whose intoxication can explain the clemency of the Semiramis of the North when she married her young and beautiful rival to Momonoff.

"Since he has not failed me, I wish him to have the millions and the girl," she thought, "if this little Mademoiselle Mignon is as homely as he says."

Three elegantly given blows announced the duke, for whom his wife opened the door herself.

"Ah! you are better, my dear," he exclaimed, with that feigned joy which courtiers know how to act so well, and at the expression of which silly people are taken.

"My dear Henri," she replied, "it is really inconceivable that you have not yet obtained Melchior's nomination, you who have sacrificed yourself for the king in accepting a ministry of a year, knowing that it would last hardly that time."

The duke looked at Philoxène, and the maid designated, by an almost imperceptible sign, the letter from Havre lying on the table.

"You will grow very weary indeed in Germany, and you will return from there after having quarreled with Melchior," said the duke ingenuously.

"And why?"

"Will you not always be together?" asked this old ambassador, with comical good nature.

"Oh! no," she said. "I am going to marry him."

"If we may believe d'Hérouville, my dear, Canalis is not waiting for your kind efforts," replied the duke with a smile. "Yesterday Grandlieu read me some passages of a letter which the Grand Equerry had written to him, and which, no doubt, were directed to your address by the aunt, for Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, always on the watch for a dowry, knows that we play whist almost every evening, Grandlieu and I. That good little d'Hérouville wants the Prince de Cadignan to give a royal hunt in Normandy and begs him to have the king there to turn the head of the damosel when she sees herself the object of such a fête. In fact, two words from Charles X. would settle the whole affair. D'Hérouville says that the girl has incomparable beauty."

"Henri, let us go to Havre!" cried the duchess interrupting her husband.

"Under what pretext?" gravely asked this man who was one of the confidants of Louis XVIII.

"I have never seen a hunt."

"That would be all right if the king went, but it would be a nuisance to go so far, and he will not go. I have just been talking to him about it."

"MADAME may go."—

"That would be better," replied the duke, "and perhaps the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse would help

me to draw her away from Rosny. The king would then think it proper for us to use his hunting equipage. Don't go to Havre, my dear," said the duke paternally, "that would give you away. Here, I have thought of a better plan. Gaspard has his château of Rosembray on the other side of the forest of Brotonne, why not give him a hint to invite them all?"

"Through whom?" asked Eléonore.

"His wife, the duchess, who accompanies Mademoiselle d'Hérouville to Communion, might, on the suggestion of this old maid, ask Gaspard.

"You are an adorable man," said Eléonore. "I will write two words to the old maid and to Diane, at once, for we must have our hunting costumes made. A hunting cap makes one look so young. Did you win yesterday at the English embassy?"

"Yes," said the duke, "I am ahead now."

"Above all, Henri, suspend everything else for the two nominations of Melchior."

After having written ten lines to the beautiful Diane de Maufrigneuse and a word of advice to Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, Eléonore sent this answer, like the lash of a whip, through Canalis's lies:

TO MONSIEUR THE BARON DE CANALIS

"My dear poet,

"Mademoiselle de la Bastie is very beautiful. Mongenod assures me that her father is worth eight

millions. I thought of marrying you to her and I am much displeased at your lack of confidence. If in going to Havre, you intended marrying La Brière to her, I do not understand why you did not tell me before you started. And why do you let two weeks pass without writing to a friend as easily made anxious as I? Your letter came a little too late, I had already seen the banker. You are a child, Melchior, and you are trying to fool us, and it is not wise. The duke himself is outraged at your conduct, he thinks you less than a gentleman, which casts some doubts on your mother's honor.

"Now, I intend to see things for myself. I will have, I think, the honor of an invitation to accompany MADAME to the hunt which the Duc d'Hérouville gives to Mademoiselle de la Bastie. I will arrange for you to be invited to Rosembray, for the meet of the hunt will probably be at the estate of the Duc de Verneuil.

"Pray believe, my dear poet, that I am none the less, for life,

"Your friend

"ELÉONORE."

"There! Ernest," said Canalis, throwing the letter which he received at breakfast at La Brière's nose across the table, "there is the two thousandth love letter which I have received from that woman and the familiar *thou* is absent. The illustrious Eléonore has never compromised herself more than

this. Go ahead and get married! The worst marriage is better than this sort of a tie. Ah! I am the greatest Nicodemus who ever fell from the moon. Modeste has millions and she is lost to me forever, for we can't get back to the poles from where we are, toward the tropics where we were only three days ago! However, I am all the more interested in your triumph over the Grand Equerry, as I told the duchess I was here only in your interest; therefore, I intend to work for you."

"Alas! Melchior, Modeste would have to be so grand, so noble, so firm, to resist the glories of the Court and the splendors so cleverly displayed in her honor and to the glory of the duke that I dare not believe that such perfection can exist, and yet if she is still the Modeste of her letters, I will not despair."

"You are happy, indeed, young Boniface, to see the world and your mistress through green spectacles!" cried Canalis as he went out to walk in the garden.

Caught between two lies, the poet did not know which way to turn.

"Play according to rule, and you lose," he cried, seated in the kiosk. "Assuredly, any sensible man would have acted as I did four days ago and would have withdrawn from a net in which he saw himself caught, for in such cases people don't untie the nets, they break through them!—Come, I must be cool, calm, dignified, affronted. Honor does not allow me to do otherwise. An English stiffness is

the only means to regain Modeste's esteem. After all, if I have to retire from the field, I can go back to my former happiness. A fidelity of ten years must be recompensed. Eléonore will arrange some good marriage for me."

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The hunt was to be the rendezvous of all the passions put into play by the colonel's fortune and Modeste's beauty; there seemed to be a truce between the adversaries and during the several days needed in preparation for this sylvan solemnity, the salon of the Mignons offered as tranquil an aspect as though a united family was gathered there. Canalis, thrown back on his rôle of a man wounded by Modeste, wanted to appear courteous; he threw aside his pretensions, gave no more samples of his oratorical talent and became what men of mind are when robbed of their affectations,—charming. He talked of finances with Gobenheim, war with the colonel, Germany with Madame Mignon, housekeeping with Madame Latournelle, trying all the time to seduce them for La Brière. The Duc d'Hérouville left the camp free to the two friends very often, as he was obliged to go to Rosembray to consult with the Duc de Verneuil and see that the orders of the Master of the Hunt, the Prince de Cadignan, were executed. However, the comic element was not lacking. Modeste was between the depreciatory remarks which Canalis suggested against the Grand Equerry and the exaggerated praises given him by the two d'Hérouville ladies, who came every evening. Canalis observed to Modeste that instead of being the heroine of the

hunt, she would hardly be noticed. MADAME would be accompanied by the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, daughter-in-law of the Prince de Cadignan, the Duchesse de Chaulieu and several ladies of the Court, among whom a little girl like her would produce no sensation. He thought they would invite the officers in garrison at Rouen, etc. Hélène never ceased to repeat to Modeste, whom she already looked upon as a sister-in-law, that she would be presented to MADAME; that the Duc de Verneuil would be sure to invite her and her father to stay at Rosembray; if the colonel wished to obtain a favor of the king, the peerage, for instance, this occasion would be unique, for they did not despair of the king's presence on the third day; that she would be surprised at the charming welcome which the most beautiful ladies of the court, the Duchesses de Chaulieu, De Maufrigneuse, De Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, etc., would accord her, Modeste's prejudices against the Faubourg Saint-Germain will all be dissipated, etc., etc. It was indeed an exceedingly amusing little warfare, with its marches, its counter-marches, and its stratagems which the Dumays, the Latournelles, Gobenheim and Butscha much enjoyed in their private confabulations when they criticized these nobles frightfully, noting with cruel minuteness their cowardices.

The words of the d'Hérouville party were confirmed by an invitation expressed in flattering terms from the Duc de Verneuil and the Master of the Hunt of France to the Count de la Bastie and his

daughter to assist at a grand hunt at Rosembray the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth days of November next.

La Brière, full of dark presentiments, enjoyed Modeste's presence with that sentiment of concentrated avidity whose pleasures are only known to lovers separated fatally from those they love. Flashes of happiness came to him, intermingled with melancholy meditations on this theme: "She is lost to me!" which rendered this young man a spectacle all the more touching that his expression and person were in harmony with this profound feeling. There is nothing more poetic than an animated elegy with restless eyes and whose sighs have no rhymes.

Finally the Duc d'Hérouville came to arrange for Modeste's departure, who, after she crossed the Seine, was to go in the duke's carriage with the d'Hérouville ladies. The duke was more than courteous; he invited Canalis and La Brière saying to them, as to Monsieur Mignon, that he had taken care to procure hunting horses for them. The colonel asked the three lovers of his daughter to breakfast the morning of their departure. Canalis then began to put into execution a plan which had ripened for several days; that of reconquering Modeste secretly and to throw over the duchess, the Grand Equerry and La Brière. A proficient in diplomacy would hardly allow himself to remain in his present position. On his side, La Brière had determined to bid an eternal farewell to Modeste. Thus each suitor appreciating that the end of the

struggle, which had lasted three weeks, had come, thought of slipping in a last word as the counsel in a case desires a last word with the judge before sentence is pronounced. After dinner that evening, the colonel took his daughter by the arm and made her understand the necessity of a decision one way or the other.

"Our position with the d'Hérouville family will be intolerable at Rosembray," he said. "Tell me, do you intend to become a duchess?"

"No, father," she replied.

"Do you love Canalis then?"

"Certainly not, father, a thousand times no," she said with childish impatience.

The colonel looked at Modeste with a kind of joy.

"Ah! I have not influenced you," said this good father, "but I can now confess that I chose my son-in-law in Paris, when, having made him believe that I had little fortune, he embraced me, saying that I had lifted a weight of one hundred pounds from his heart."

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Modeste blushing.

"*Of the man of positive virtues and sure morality,*" he said, laughingly repeating the phrase which, the morning after his return, had dissipated Modeste's dreams.

"Ah! I was not thinking of him, papa! Leave me free to refuse the duke myself. I understand him, I know how to flatter him—"

"Your choice is not then made?"

"Not yet. There are still several syllables in the charade of my future to be guessed. After I have seen the Court life at Rosembray, I promise to tell you my secret."

"You will go to the hunt, I suppose?" cried the colonel, seeing La Brière from afar coming into the lane where he was walking with Modeste.

"No, colonel," replied Ernest. "I have come to take leave of you and of mademoiselle, I return to Paris—"

"You have no curiosity," said Modeste interrupting him and looking timidly at Ernest.

"A desire—which I dare not hope for—would be sufficient to make me remain," he said.

"If that is all, you must stay to please me," said the colonel going forward to join Canalis and leaving his daughter and poor La Brière together for a few moments.

"Mademoiselle," he said raising his eyes to hers with the courage of despair, "I have a favor to ask of you."

"Of me?"

"It is that I may take away with me your forgiveness! My life will never be happy and I have the remorse of having lost my happiness through my own fault; but at least—"

"Before leaving us forever," said Modeste interrupting à la Canalis in a voice of emotion, "I wish to ask you one thing, and if you once practised disguising yourself, I do not think you base enough to deceive me—"

The word base made Ernest turn pale.

"Ah! you are pitiless!" he cried.

"Will you be frank?"

"You have the right to ask me so degrading a question," he said in a voice weakened by the violent palpitation of his heart.

"Well then, have you read my letters to Monsieur de Canalis?"

"No, mademoiselle, and I only showed them to the colonel in order to justify my attachment by showing him how it was born and how sincere had been my attempts to cure you of your mistaken idea."

"But how did the idea of this ignoble masquerading come about?" she asked impatiently.

La Brière related truthfully the scene occasioned by the first of Modeste's letters, and how he had been challenged on expressing a good opinion of a young girl, who was attracted toward fame as a flower toward the sun.

"Enough," said Modeste restraining her emotion. "If you have not my heart, monsieur, you have at least my esteem."

This simple phrase caused the most violent emotion in La Brière. He felt himself tottering, and leaned against a tree, like a man deprived of reason. Modeste had turned away, but seeing him she came back quickly.

"What is the matter?" she asked, taking his hand to prevent his falling. His hand was icy cold and his face as pale as a lily, all his blood had gone to his heart.

"Forgive me, mademoiselle—but I thought you despised me—"

"But," she replied with haughty disdain, "I have not said that I loved you."

And she again left La Brière, who in spite of the harshness of her last speech, thought that he walked on air. The earth softened under his feet, the trees seemed to blossom with flowers, the sky became rose color and the air cerulean, as in the hymen temples, in those fairy tales which end happily. In such cases, women are like Janus. They see what takes place behind them without turning around, and Modeste saw in the countenance of this lover the unmistakable symptoms of a love like Butscha's, which is certainly the *ne plus ultra* of a woman's desires. The high estimate which La Brière attached to her esteem caused Modeste an infinitely sweet emotion.

"Mademoiselle," said Canalis, leaving the colonel, and joining Modeste, "in spite of the small value which you attach to my feelings, my honor demands that I efface a blemish under which it has suffered too long. Five days after my arrival here, see what the Duchesse de Chaulieu wrote me."

He let Modeste read the first lines of the letter in which the duchess said that she had seen Mongenod and wished Melchior to marry Modeste; then he tore up the rest of the letter, leaving her that fragment.

"I cannot allow you to see the rest," he said, putting the paper into his pocket, "but I trust these

few lines to your delicacy in order that you may verify the handwriting. The young girl who has supposed me to have unworthy sentiments is also capable of believing some collusion or stratagem. This may prove how much I desire to convince you that the quarrel which exists between us has not had, with me, a selfish interest for basis. Ah! Modeste," he said in a choking voice, "your poet, the poet of Madame de Chaulieu, has not less poetry in his heart than in his mind. You will see the duchess; suspend your judgment of me until then." And he left Modeste bewildered.

"Ah, yes! they are all angels," she said to herself, "but they are not marriageable! the duke alone seems to belong to humanity."

"Mademoiselle Modeste, this hunting party makes me nervous," said Butscha, who appeared carrying a package under his arm. "I dreamed that your horse ran away with you, so I went to Rouen to find a Spanish bit, as I am told a horse can never take it between his teeth. I implore you to use it. I have shown it to the colonel, who has already thanked me more than it is worth."

"Poor, dear Butscha!" exclaimed Modeste, moved to tears by this motherly care.

Butscha went away skipping joyously, like a man who has just learned of the death of an old uncle whose heir he will be.

"My dear father," said Modeste as she returned to the drawing-room, "I wish very much to have that beautiful whip. Suppose you ask Monsieur

de la Brière to exchange it for your picture by Van Ostade?"

Modeste looked at Ernest slyly while the colonel made him the proposition before this picture; the only thing which he had as souvenir of his campaigns and which he had purchased of a citizen of Ratisbonne. She said to herself, as she saw with what precipitation La Brière left the salon, "He will be of the hunting-party!"

It was a strange thing that each of the three lovers of Modeste should go to Rosembray with a heart full of hope and enraptured with her adorable qualities.

Rosembray, an estate lately bought by the Duc de Verneuil with the sum which gave him his portion of the thousand millions of francs voted to legitimize the sale of national estates, is remarkable for a château of a magnificence comparable to that of Mesnière and Balleroy. This imposing and noble edifice is reached by an immense avenue of four rows of venerable elms, and through a very large sloping Court of Honor like that of Versailles with magnificent gates, two lodges for the concierge, and ornamented with large orange trees in boxes. The château looks out upon the court between two buildings at each side; two rows of nineteen tall arched sculptured windows, with small panes of glass, separated by a series of fluted columns. An entablature with balustrade hides an Italian roof, from which rise chimneys of cut stone concealed by trophies of arms. Rosembray was

built under Louis XIV. by a farmer-general named Cottin. Upon the park the façade is distinguished from that on the court by a projection of five windows with columns, above which a magnificent pediment rises. The family of Marigny, to whom the property of this Cottin was brought by Mademoiselle Cottin, sole heiress of her father, ordered a sunrise to be carved there by Coysevox. Underneath two angels are unrolling a ribbon upon which may be read this device, substituted for the old one in honor of the great King: *Sol nobis benignus*. The great king had conferred a dukedom on the Marquis de Marigny, though he was one of the least of his favorites.

From the landing of the grand circular steps with balustrade, the view extends over an immense pond, as long and broad as the grand canal at Versailles; which begins at the end of a lawn worthy of the most English greensward, bordered with baskets in which the autumnal flowers were then brilliant. At each side, two gardens in the French style displayed their squares and paths, their beautiful pages written in the most majestic style of Le Nôtre. These two gardens are framed their entire length by a grove of trees of about thirty acres, in which, under Louis XV., English parks were laid out. From the terrace the view is finished at the bottom by a forest, a dependency of Rosembray, and adjoining two forests, one belonging to the state, the other to the crown. It would be difficult to find a more beautiful landscape.

*

The arrival of Modeste made a certain sensation in the avenue, where a carriage with the livery of France was seen approaching, accompanied by the Grand Equerry, the colonel, Canalis and La Brière, all on horseback, preceded by an outrider in grand livery, followed by ten servants, among whom were noticed the mulatto, the negro, and the elegant britzka of the colonel for the two maids and the baggage. The carriage with four horses was driven by tigers dressed with a splendor ordered by the Grand Equerry, who was often better served than the king. As she entered and saw this little Versailles, Modeste, dazzled by the magnificence of these grand lords, suddenly thought of her interview with the celebrated duchesses, and feared that she would appear embarrassed, provincial or parvenu; indeed she lost her head completely and repented of having desired this hunting-party.

When the carriage stopped, most fortunately Modeste noticed her host, an old man with white wig curled in little ringlets, whose calm, full, smooth face presented a fatherly smile and expressed a monastic sprightliness which was made almost noble by his half-veiled glance. The duchess, a woman of the greatest devoutness, the only daughter of an extremely rich man, a first president of a law court who died in 1800, was lean and straight,

the mother of four children, and resembled Madame Latournelle, if the imagination will consent to embellish the notary's wife with all the graces of a manner which was truly that of an abbess.

"Ah! good-morning, dear Hortense," said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, who embraced the duchess with all the sympathy which united these two haughty characters; "allow me to present to you, also to our dear duke, this little angel, Mademoiselle de la Bastie."

"We have heard so much said about you, mademoiselle," said the duchess, "that we have been very eager to have you here."

"We regret the lost time," said the Duc de Verneuil, as he bowed with gallant admiration.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie," said the Grand Equerry, as he took the colonel by the arm and presented him to the duke and duchess with respectful tone and gesture.

The colonel saluted the duchess, the duke extended his hand to him. "Welcome, Monsieur le Comte," said Monsieur de Verneuil. "You possess many treasures," he added, looking at Modeste.

The duchess took Modeste by the arm and led her into an immense salon where a dozen women were grouped before the chimney-piece. The men, led by the duke, were promenading upon the terrace, with the exception of Canalis, who surrendered himself respectfully to the superb Eléonore. The duchess, seated at a tapestry frame, was giving

advice about shading the colors to Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

If Modeste had pricked her finger with a needle in handling a pincushion, she could not have been more deeply hurt than she was by the icy, haughty, disdainful glance which the Duchesse de Chaulieu cast upon her. From the first moment, she saw only this woman and she fathomed her. To understand to what point the cruelty of these charming beings, whom our passions deify, may extend, we must see women among themselves. Modeste would have disarmed any other than Eléonore by her unrestrained and involuntary admiration for her, for without knowing her age, she would have thought she was looking at a woman of thirty-six—but many other astonishing things were reserved for her.

The poet came under the anger of the great lady. Such anger is like the most fearful sphinx; the face being radiant, all the rest threatening. The exquisite, cold politeness which a mistress hides under her steel armor kings themselves cannot make capitulate. The exquisite head of the woman smiles, and at the same time she becomes steel; the hand, the arms, the body,—all is of steel. Canalis endeavored to cling to this steel, but his fingers slipped on it as his words upon her heart. And the gracious head, the gracious speech, and the gracious bearing of the duchess disguised from all the steel of her temper, which had descended to twenty-five degrees below zero. The aspect of the

sublime beauty of Modeste heightened by the journey, and the sight of this young girl dressed as well as Diane de Maufrigneuse, had ignited the powder heaped up in Eléonore's mind.

All the women had gone to the window to see alight from her carriage the wonder of the day, accompanied by her three lovers.

"Do not let us appear too curious," Madame de Chaulieu had said, cut to the heart by Diane's exclamation, "She is divine! Where did she come from?"

And they flew back into the salon, where each one recovered her usual expression, and where the Duchesse de Chaulieu felt a thousand vipers in her heart which all demanded to be fed at the same time.

Mademoiselle d'Hérouville said meaningly in a low voice to the Duchesse de Verneuil:

"Eléonore receives her great Melchior very badly."

"The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse believes that there is a coldness between them," replied Laure de Verneuil simply.

This phrase, spoken so often in society, is indeed very expressive. The wind of the North Pole is felt in it.

"And why so?" asked Modeste of that charming young girl who had come out of the Sacred Heart only two months before.

"The great man," replied the devout duchess, who made a sign to her daughter to be silent, "left

her without one word for two weeks after his departure for Havre, after having told her that he had gone there for his health."

Modeste made a hasty movement, which struck Laure, Hélène, and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

"And during this time," continued the devout duchess, "she procured for him the nomination of Commander and Minister at Baden."

"Oh, it was wicked in Canalis, for he owes everything to her," said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

"Why did not Madame de Chaulieu come to Havre?" asked Modeste naïvely of Hélène.

"My little one," said the Duchesse de Verneuil, "she would allow herself to be cut to pieces without saying a word. Look at her! What a queen! Her head on the block, she would smile as Mary Stuart did; and our beautiful Eléonore has, moreover, some of that blood in her veins."

"Did she not write to him?" asked Modeste.

"Diane," replied the duchess, encouraged in these confidences by a nudge on the elbow by Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, "tells me that she made a very stinging reply to the first letter that Canalis wrote her, about ten days ago."

This explanation made Modeste blush with shame for Canalis; she longed, not to crush him under her feet, but to avenge herself by one of those malicious acts more cruel than a dagger's blow. She looked haughtily at the Duchesse de Chaulieu. It was a look gilded by eight millions.

"Monsieur Melchior!" she said.

Every woman raised her head and cast her eyes alternately upon the duchess, who was talking in a low voice with Canalis at the frame, and upon this young girl so badly brought up as to interrupt two lovers engaged in a quarrel, a thing not done in any society. Diane de Maufrigneuse tossed her head as if saying, "The child is in the right."

The dozen women ended by smiling among themselves, for they were all jealous of a woman fifty-six years old, still beautiful enough to be able to filch from the common treasury the share due to youth.

Melchior looked at Modeste with a feverish impatience and with the gesture of a master to a servant, while the duchess lowered her head with a movement like a lioness, disturbed at her feast; but her eyes looking at the canvas darted almost red flames at the poet, while seeking in her heart some epigrammatic blows, for each word revealed a triple insult.

"Monsieur Melchior," repeated Modeste in a voice which had the right to make itself heard.

"What, mademoiselle?" asked the poet.

Obliged to rise, he remained standing midway between the frame, which was near a window, and the chimney-piece, near which Modeste was seated on a sofa by the Duchesse de Verneuil. What poignant reflections this ambitious man made as he received the fixed look of Eléonore! If he obeyed Modeste, all was over forever between the poet and his protectress. Not to listen to the young girl,

CANALIS BETWEEN MODESTE AND THE DUCHESSE

The beauty and the fortune of Modeste, placed in juxtaposition with the influence and the rights of Eléonore, made this hesitation between the man and his honor as terrible to witness as the peril of a matador in the arena. A man rarely experiences such palpitations as those which almost gave Canalis an aneurism, except before the green cloth, when his ruin or his fortune is decided in five minutes.

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CANALIS BETWEEN MODESTE AND THE DUCHESSE

The beauty and the fortune of Modeste, placed in juxtaposition with the influence and the rights of Honorée, made this hesitation between the man and his honor as terrible to sublimes as the peril of a murderer in the arena. A man rarely experiences such palpitations as those which almost grave Canalis on rheumatism, except before the green cloth, when his ruin or his fortune is decided in five minutes.

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would be for Canalis to declare his servitude, he would annul the profit of his twenty-five days of trickery, and he would be wanting in the simplest laws of civility. The greater the folly, the more imperiously the duchess exacted it. The beauty and the fortune of Modeste, placed in juxtaposition with the influence and the rights of Eléonore, made this hesitation between the man and his honor as terrible to witness as the peril of a matador in the arena. A man rarely experiences such palpitations as those which almost gave Canalis an aneurism, except before the green cloth, when his ruin or his fortune is decided in five minutes.

"Mademoiselle d'Hérouville hurried me from the carriage so quickly that I have left my handkerchief there," said Modeste to Canalis.

Canalis shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"And," said Modeste, continuing in spite of this impatient gesture, "I have tied up in it the key of a portfolio which contains a piece of an important letter; have the kindness, Melchior, to get it for me—"

Between an angel and a tigress, equally irritated, Canalis became pallid, but he hesitated no longer, the tigress appeared to him less dangerous; he was going to show his intentions when La Brière appeared at the drawing-room door, and he seemed to him like the archangel Michael falling from Heaven.

"Ernest, stop, Mademoiselle de la Bastie wants you," said the poet, who quickly regained his chair near the duchess.

Ernest ran to Modeste without bowing to any one, he saw only her; he received this commission with noticeable happiness, and rushed from the room with the secret approbation of all the women.

"What an occupation for a poet," said Modeste to Hélène, pointing out the tapestry frame at which the duchess was working furiously.

"If you speak to her, if you look at her once, all is over between us forever," said Eléonore to Melchior in a low voice, as she was not satisfied with the compromise of Ernest.

"Think well of it. When I am not by, I shall leave eyes which will observe you."

At these words the duchess, a woman of medium height, but a little too stout, as are all women past fifty who remain handsome, rose and walked, stepping daintily on small and sinewy feet like those of a roe, toward the group in which Diane de Maufrigneuse was. Beneath her plumpness was revealed the exquisite delicacy with which this sort of woman is endowed, and which gives her the vigor of her nervous system which dominates and invigorates the development of the flesh. Otherwise her light step, which was of an incomparable nobleness, could not be explained.

Only the women whose quarterings begin with Noah, know how, like Eléonore, to be queenly in spite of being as plump as a farmer's wife. A philosopher, perhaps, would have pitied Philoxène in admiring the fortunate distribution of the corsage and the careful details of a morning costume, carried

off with the elegance of a queen and the ease of a young woman. With hair, daringly dressed with abundant curls, without any dye, and braided high upon her head, Eléonore proudly displayed her snowy neck, her breast and beautifully modeled shoulders, her dazzlingly brilliant bare arms, and celebrated hands. Modeste, like all the antagonists of the duchess, recognized in her one of those women of whom one naturally says: "She is our superior." And, indeed, Eléonore was one of those grand women who have now become so rare in France. It would be like trying to analyze the sublime, to attempt to describe the stateliness in the carriage of her head, the fineness and delicacy in such and such a bending of her neck, the harmony in her movements, the dignity in her bearing, the nobility in the perfect accord of the details with the whole, and in those artifices which finally become natural and which make of a woman something grand and sacred. This poetry is enjoyed like that of Paganini, without being able to explain to one's self its medium, for the cause is always the soul, which is manifesting itself.

The duchess inclined her head to salute Hélène and her aunt, then she said to Diane in a sprightly, pure voice, without a sign of emotion:

"Is it not time for us to dress, duchess?"

And she went out, accompanied by her daughter-in-law and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, both of whom gave her an arm. She talked low, in going out, with the elderly lady, who pressed her against

her heart saying: "How charming you are!" which signified, "I am indebted to you for the service which you have just done us."

Mademoiselle d'Hérouville returned to play the spy and her first glance apprised Canalis that the last word of the duchess had not been a vain threat. The diplomatic apprentice found he had too little science for such a terrible struggle, but his intelligence at least enabled him to put himself into a true, if not worthy position. When Ernest reappeared bringing Modeste's handkerchief, he took him by the arm and led him out upon the lawn.

"My dear friend," he said to him, "I am not only the most unhappy, but the most ridiculous man in the world; therefore, I have recourse to you to draw me out of the wasp's nest into which I have thrust myself. Modeste is a demon; she has seen my embarrassment, she is laughing at it, and she has just spoken of two lines from one of Madame de Chaulieu's letters, which I was so foolish as to trust to her. Should she show them, I shall never be able to make up with Eléonore. Therefore, ask Modeste at once for this paper and tell her from me, that I have no views respecting her, no pretensions. I count upon her delicacy, upon the honor of a young girl, to conduct herself toward me as if we had never seen one another. I beg her not to speak to me, and I entreat her to treat me with sternness, without daring to ask from her a sort of jealous anger which would serve my interests marvelously well. Go! I will await you here."

*

Ernest de la Brière noticed, as he returned to the drawing-room, a young officer of the company of the Guards of Havre, the Vicomte de Sérizy, who had just arrived from Rosny to announce that MADAME was obliged to attend at the opening of the session. One knows how important this constitutional solemnity was when Charles X. pronounced his discourse, surrounded by all his family, Madame la Dauphine and MADAME being there in their tribune. The choice of ambassador charged to express the regrets of the princess was an attention to Diane. It was said she was adored by this charming young man, son of a Minister of State, gentleman of the king's bed-chamber, with the prospect of a high destiny in his quality of only son and the heir of an immense fortune. The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse allowed the attentions of the viscount only for the purpose of better calling attention to the age of Madame de Sérizy, his mother, who according to the chronicle published *sub rosa,* had stolen away from her the heart of the handsome Lucien de Rubempré.

"You will do us the pleasure, I hope, of remaining at Rosembray," said the severe duchess to the young officer.

In opening her ears widely to scandal, the devout woman closed her eyes to the levity of her guests,

carefully paired off by the duke; for one does not know all that these excellent women will tolerate under the pretext of leading back to the fold, through their indulgence, the erring sheep.

"We reckoned," said the Grand Equerry, "without our constitutional government, and Rosembray and Madame la Duchesse will lose a great honor by it—"

"We shall only be more at our ease by it," said a tall, lean old man, of about seventy-five years old, dressed in blue cloth, and keeping on his hunting cap with the ladies' permission.

This personage, who greatly resembled the Duc de Bourbon, was no less than the Prince de Cadignan, Master of the Hounds, one of the last great French lords.

At the instant when La Brière tried to pass behind the sofa to ask for a moment's conversation with Modeste, a man thirty-eight years old, short, fat, and vulgar, entered.

"My son, the Prince de Loudon," said the Duchesse de Verneuil to Modeste, who could not repress an expression of astonishment at seeing by whom the name was borne which the general of the Vendean cavalry had made so celebrated, both by his boldness and by the martyrdom of his sufferings.

The present Duc de Verneuil was a third son taken by his father with him when he emigrated and the sole survivor of four children.

"Gaspard!" said the duchess calling her son to her.

The young prince came at his mother's command, who continued as she pointed to Modeste:

"Mademoiselle de la Bastie, my friend."

The heir presumptive, whose marriage had been arranged with the only daughter of Desplein, bowed to the young girl, without appearing to be struck with wonder at her beauty as his father had been. Modeste could then compare the youth of to-day with the old age of former times, for the old Prince de Cadignan had already said to her two or three charming things, thus proving to her that he rendered as much homage to woman as to royalty. The Duc de Rhétoré, the eldest son of Madame de Chaulieu, chiefly noticeable for that tone which unites impertinence and unceremoniousness, had, like the Prince de Loudon, bowed to Modeste almost cavalierly. The reason of this contrast between the sons and fathers comes, perhaps, from the fact that the heirs do not feel themselves of great importance like their grandfathers, and rid themselves of the burden of power when they find that they possess only the shadow of it. The fathers have still the politeness inherent to their vanished grandeur, like the summits still gilded by the sun when everything is in shadow around.

At last Ernest could whisper two words to Modeste, who arose.

"My little dear," said the duchess thinking Modeste was going to dress, as she drew the bell-rope, "you shall be conducted to your room."

Ernest went with Modeste to the grand staircase, repeating to her the unfortunate Canalis's request, and he tried to touch her by painting Melchior's agonies.

"He loves, you see! He is a captive who thought he could break his chain."

"That fierce, fortune calculator in love?" laughed Modeste.

"Mademoiselle, you are entering life, you do not know its windings. You must pardon a man all his inconsistencies, who puts himself under the dominion of a woman older than himself, for he is powerless. Think of the sacrifices Canalis has made for his divinity! Now he has sown too many seeds to disdain the harvest, the duchess represents ten years of care and happiness. You have made this poet forget all, who unfortunately has more vanity than pride; he has known what he was losing only when he again saw Madame de Chaulieu. If you knew Canalis you would aid him. He is a child who is always upsetting his life! You call him a calculator; but he calculates very badly. Besides, like all poets and people of sentiment, he is full of childish actions, dazzled like children by that which sparkles, and running after it. He loved horses and pictures, then he cherished fame; he sold his pictures to have armor, and furniture of the Renaissance and of Louis XV. Now he wants power. Acknowledge at least that his playthings are noble."

"Enough!" said Modeste. "Come," she said, as she saw her father, whom she called by a sign of her

head, to ask for his arm, "I am going to give you the two lines; you will carry them to the great man, and assure him of an entire compliance with his wishes on my part, but on one condition. I wish you to give him my thanks for the pleasure I have had in seeing played, for myself alone, one of the most beautiful of German theatrical plays. I know now that the masterpiece of Goethe is neither *Faust* nor the *Count of Egmont.*"

And as Ernest looked with a puzzled air at the mischievous girl, she continued: "It is *Torquato Tasso.* Tell Monsieur de Canalis to read it over again," she added with a smile. "I insist that you repeat this word for word to your friend, for this is not an epigram, but the justification of his conduct, with this difference, that he will become, I hope, very reasonable, thanks to Eléonore's folly."

The first lady in waiting of the duchess led the way for Modeste and her father to their rooms, where Françoise Cochet had already put everything in order, the elegance and refinement of which astonished the colonel, when Françoise said that there were thirty apartments of this style in the château.

"This is what I understand by a landed estate," said Modeste.

"The Comte de la Bastie must build a similar château for you," replied the colonel.

"Here, monsieur," said Modeste, giving the little paper to Ernest, "go and reassure our friend."

This expression "our friend" struck the auditor. He looked at Modeste to know if there was anything

serious in the community of sentiments which she appeared to accept, and the young girl understanding this interrogation, said to him:

"Well, hurry! Your friend awaits you."

La Brière blushed exceedingly and went out in a state of doubt, anxiety, and of trouble more cruel than despair. The approaches to happiness are, for true lovers, comparable to that which Catholic poetry has so well called the entrance to Paradise. It expresses a shadowy, difficult, and narrow place where the last cries of the supreme agony resound.

One hour later, the illustrious company, in full complement, was reunited in the salon, some playing whist, others talking, and the ladies busy with some trifling work while waiting for the announcement of dinner. The Master of the Hounds was talking with Monsieur Mignon about China, his campaigns, about the families of Portenduère, the l'Estorades, and the Maucombes of Provence. He reproached him for not having asked for service, in assuring him that nothing was easier than to restore him to his rank of colonel in the Guard.

"A man of your birth and fortune ought not to wed the opinions of the present opposition," said the prince with a smile.

This society, of the best, not only pleased Modeste, but she acquired there, during her stay, a perfection of manner which without this revelation would have been wanting all her life. Show a clock to an embryo mechanic and it will reveal to him the mechanism in its entirety, as it immediately

develops the germs of a faculty which sleeps within him. In the same way, Modeste knew how to appropriate for herself all that made the Duchesses de Maufrigneuse and de Chaulieu distinguished. All this was for her an education, although one of the middle-class would have brought away only the ridiculousness of an imitation of these manners. A young girl well-born, educated and inclined as Modeste, naturally put herself in sympathy with her surroundings and discovered the differences which separate the aristocratic world from that of the middle-class, the province from the Faubourg Saint-Germain. She seized these almost undiscernible shades, and recognized the grace of the great lady without despairing of acquiring it. She found that her father and La Brière appeared infinitely better than Canalis in the bosom of this Olympus. The great poet, abdicating his real and incontestable power, that of the mind, was only a Master of Requests desiring the office of Minister, pursuing the collar of Commander, and obliged to please all these constellations. Ernest de la Brière, without ambition remained himself; while Melchior, having become a toady, to make use of a vulgar expression, courted the Prince de Loudon, the Duc de Rhétoré, the Vicomte de Sérizy, and the Duc de Maufrigneuse, as a man who did not dare to speak his mind like Colonel Mignon, Comte de la Bastie, proud of his services and the esteem of the Emperor Napoléon. Modeste remarked the continual preoccupation of the man of mind seeking an

opportunity for a witticism, a brilliant speech to cause laughter or a compliment to flatter these mighty powers with whom Melchior wished to remain on good terms. Thus, at last, this peacock lost his plumage.

In the middle of the evening, Modeste seated herself with the Grand Equerry in a corner of the drawing-room. She had led him there to end a struggle which she could no longer encourage without despising herself.

"Monsieur le Duc, if you knew me," she said to him, "you would know how much I am touched by your attentions. Precisely on account of the deep esteem which I have conceived for your character, and of the friendship which a soul like yours inspires, I would not wish to wound your self-love in the slightest degree. Before your arrival at Havre, I loved sincerely, deeply, and forever, a person worthy of being loved, and for whom my affection is still a secret; but know—and here I am more sincere than most young girls—that if I had not had this voluntary attachment you would have been my choice, so greatly do I recognize noble and fine qualities in you. The few words spoken by your sister and aunt oblige me to speak with you thus. If you deem it advisable to-morrow before the departure of the hunting party, my mother will have recalled me to her by a message under the pretext of severe indisposition. I do not wish, without your consent, to take part at a fête which I owe to your kindness, and where my secret, should it

escape me, would pain you by clashing with your legitimate claims. Why did I come here? Will you tell me? I could not refuse to accept the invitation. Be generous enough to excuse me from an almost necessary curiosity. This is not the most delicate part of that which I have to say to you. You have in my father and me truer friends than you think; and as my fortune was the first motive in your thoughts when you came to me, without wishing to make use of this as a balm to your sorrow which you have gallantly testified, know that my father is busying himself about the matter of Hérouville. His friend Dumay thinks it feasible, and he has already taken steps to form a company. Gobenheim, Dumay, and my father offer fifteen hundred thousand francs, and take upon themselves to acquire the remainder by the confidence which they inspire in capitalists by taking this serious interest in the business. If I have not the honor of being the Duchesse d'Hérouville, I am almost sure of placing you in a position to choose her some day at pleasure, in all freedom, in the high circle where she is. Oh! allow me to finish," she said at a gesture from the duke—

"Judging from your brother's emotion," said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville to her niece, "it is easy to see that you have a sister."

—"Monsieur le Duc, this was decided by me the day of our first horseback ride when I heard you deplore your situation. That is what I wished to reveal to you. That day my fate was fixed. If you

have not found a wife, you have found friends at Ingouville, if you deign to accept us by that title."

This little speech, premeditated by Modeste, was said with such a charm of soul, that tears came to the eyes of the Grand Equerry, who seized Modeste's hand and kissed it.

"Stay here during the hunt," replied the duke, "my lack of merit has accustomed me to these refusals; but, while accepting your friendship and that of the colonel, you must allow me to assure myself through the judgment of competent scientific men that the draining of the Hérouville marshes will add no risk, in fact, that they will yield profits to the company of which you speak, before I can agree to accept this offer of your friends. You are a noble girl, however much I may suffer in being only a friend to you, I will glory in the title and will prove myself worthy to bear it at all times and in all places."

"In any case, Monsieur le Duc, let us keep our secret. My choice will not be known, unless I deceive myself, until my mother's complete recovery, for I wish that my future husband and I should be blessed by her first glance."

*

"Ladies," said the Prince de Cadignan just before retiring, "I hear that several of you intend to follow the chase to-morrow with us. Now I believe it my duty to warn you that if you intend to emulate Diana you must rise like Diana at daybreak. The meet is fixed for half-past eight. I have seen women, in the course of my life, show more courage than men, but for a short time only, and you will need all your strength to stay on horseback all day, except a short halt which we will make for breakfast, like true hunters and huntresses 'on the nail.' Are you still determined to show yourselves finished horsewomen?"

"For myself, prince, I must," said Modeste adroitly.

"I will answer for myself," said the Duchesse de Chaulieu.

"I know that my daughter, Diane, is worthy of her name," replied the prince. "So you are all resolute—Nevertheless, I shall arrange for the sake of Madame and Mademoiselle de Verneuil and those who stay here to drive the stag to the bottom of the pond."

"Rest assured, ladies," said the Prince de Loudon, when the Prince de Cadignan had left the room, "that the breakfast 'on the nail' will take place in a magnificent tent."

The next day, at dawn, there was every reason

to predict a beautiful day. The skies veiled by a slight gray vapor showed spaces of pure blue and the northwest winds which already played with these fleecy clouds, promised to sweep them all away by midday. In setting out from the château, the Master of the Hunt, the Prince de Loudon and the Duc de Rhétoré, who were accompanied by ladies, started in advance. They noticed and admired the white mass of the château with its many chimneys rising through the cloud of mists, against a background of red-brown foliage, which the trees of Normandy preserve at the close of autumn.

"The ladies are favored in having fine weather," said the Duc de Rhétoré to the prince.

"Oh! in spite of their boastings of yesterday, I believe they will allow us to go to the chase without them," replied the prince.

"That might be if each had not an escort," said the duke.

At this moment, these two determined huntsmen —for the Prince de Loudon and the Duc de Rhétoré were of the race of Nimrod and had the reputation of being the finest shots of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—heard the noise of an altercation and they put spurs to their horses and galloped toward the round point chosen for the meet, which was at one of the entrances of the Rosembray woods, and famous for its mossy turf. The quarrel arose from the fact that the Prince de Loudon, who was an anglomaniac, had placed under the orders of the Master of the Hunt, a hunting arrangement entirely

Britannic. Now, a young Englishman of small build, blond, pale, with an indifferent, phlegmatic air, speaking hardly a word of French, and dressed with a neatness which distinguishes all Englishmen, even those of the middle-class, had put himself at one side of the round point. John Barry wore a short frock coat, close fitting, of scarlet cloth with silk buttons, on which were the De Verneuil arms, white leather breeches, top boots, a striped waistcoat and a cape and collar of black velvet. He held in his hand a small hunting whip, and had on his left side a brass horn attached by a silk cord. This first whipper-in was accompanied by two large thoroughbred hounds, veritable foxhounds, with white and liver-colored skins, long hind legs, delicate noses, small heads and little high-placed ears. This whipper-in, one of the most celebrated of the country from which the prince had brought him at great expense, commanded a hunting establishment of fifteen horses and sixty English thoroughbred dogs, which cost the Duc de Verneuil an enormous amount of money. He really cared little for hunting, but indulged his son in this essentially royal taste. The subordinates, men and horses, stood at a respectful distance in perfect silence.

Now, upon arriving on the ground, John saw that three whippers-in, at the head of two royal packs, had arrived before him. They had come in carriages and were the three best whippers-in of the Prince de Cadignan and their appearance on account of their manners and French costumes formed a

marked contrast to the representative of insolent Albion. These favorites of the prince, all wearing their three-cornered laced hats, very flat and broad, under which grinned their sun-burnt furrowed faces, illuminated by sparkling eyes, were remarkably lean, thin and nervous, like persons consumed by the passion for hunting. Each one was provided with three great hunting horns à la Dampierre, which were ornamented with heavy green cord which only allowed the brass mouthpiece to be visible. They controlled their dogs by the eye and voice. These noble beasts formed an assembly of subjects more faithful than those whom the king was then addressing. They were all spotted with white, brown or black, each having a face as intelligent as the soldiers of Napoléon; the slightest sound illumined the pupils of their eyes with a fire which made them resemble diamonds. One of them from Poitou, with short haunches, large shoulders, low joints and long ears; another from England, white, like a greyhound with small belly, little ears and modeled for running; all the young ones impatient and nervous to start, while the old ones, marked with wounds, lay flat and quiet with their heads on their front paws and listening, like savages, at the ground.

Seeing the Englishman approach, the dogs and the king's followers looked at one another as much as to say:

"Are we then not to hunt alone?—will not the service of His Majesty be compromised?"

After commencing by pleasantries, the discussion became heated between Monsieur Jacquin la Roulie, the old chief of the French whippers-in, and John Barry, the young Islander.

From afar off the two princes divined the subject of this altercation, and, urging his horse, the Master of the Hounds quieted everything by asking in an imperative voice:

"Who has beaten the woods?"

"I, my lord," said the Englishman.

"Good," said the Prince de Cadignan as he listened to John Barry's report.

Horses, dogs, everyone became respectful to the Master of the Hounds as if all equally recognized his supreme authority. The prince arranged the day. For a hunt is like a battle and the Master of the Hounds of Charles X. was the Napoléon of the forest. Thanks to the admirable order introduced into the hunting train by him the master could occupy himself exclusively with the strategy and high science of it. He understood how to assign its place in the disposition of the day's work to the hunting party of the Prince de Loudon by reserving it, like a cavalry corps, to beat up the stag toward the pond; if as he expected, the royal pack succeeded in driving him into the Crown forest which bordered the horizon in front of the château. The Master of the Hounds knew how to treat with consideration the self-love of his old servants by confiding to them the hardest work; and that of the Englishman, whom he made use of in his specialty,

by giving him an opportunity to show the prowess of his dogs' and horses' legs. The two systems would thus be in competition and do wonders in emulation of each other.

"Does Monseigneur still order us to wait?" asked La Roulie respectfully.

"I understand you, old fellow!" replied the prince, "it is late, but—"

"Here are the ladies, for Jupiter scents the odors of the *fétiches,*" said the second whipper-in, as he noticed the way that his favorite dog was taking to the scent.

"*Fétiches?*" said the Prince de Loudon with a smile.

"Perhaps he wanted to say fetid," said the Duc de Rhétoré.

"That is it indeed, for everything which does not smell of the kennels, is infectious according to Monsieur Laravine," replied the Master of the Hounds.

The three lords did indeed see afar off a squadron composed of sixteen horses, at the head of which floated the green veils of the four ladies. Modeste, accompanied by her father, the Grand Equerry and the little La Brière, was in advance at the side of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, who was escorted by the Vicomte de Sérizy. Then came the Duchesse de Chaulieu flanked by Canalis upon whom she was smiling, without a trace of rancor. Upon arriving at the cross-roads, where the huntsmen, dressed in red and armed with their hunting horns, surrounded by dogs and whippers-in, formed a

picture worthy of the brush of a Van der Meulen; the Duchesse de Chaulieu, who sat admirably well on her horse, in spite of her plumpness, approached Modeste as she found it inconsistent with her dignity to sulk any longer with this young person, to whom she had not spoken a word the evening before.

Just as the Master of the Hounds finished complimenting the ladies upon their fabulous punctuality, Eléonore deigned to notice the magnificent whip-handle which sparkled in Modeste's tiny hand and graciously asked permission to inspect it.

"This is the most magnificent of its kind that I have ever seen," she said as she showed this masterpiece to Diane de Maufrigneuse, "and besides, it is in harmony with the entire person," she added, as she handed it back to Modeste.

"You must own, Madame la Duchesse," replied Mademoiselle de la Bastie, as she cast a tender and mischievous glance at La Brière, in which the lover read an avowal, "that it is a very singular gift from one's future husband."

"But," said Madame de Maufrigneuse, "I should take it as a declaration of my rights in remembrance of Louis XIV."

Tears came into La Brière's eyes and he dropped his horse's rein, and seemed about to fall; but a second glance from Modeste gave him back his strength in commanding him not to betray his happiness.

As they started off the Duc d'Hérouville said in a low voice to the young auditor:

"I hope, monsieur, you will make your wife

happy and if I can be useful to you in anything, command me, for I would like to be able to contribute to the happiness of so charming a pair."

This great day, in which such tremendous interests of heart and fortune were decided, offered to the Master of the Hounds only one problem. That of knowing if the stag would traverse the pond to die on the lawn in front of the château; for celebrated huntsmen are like chess-players, who predict the checkmate on a particular square. This fortunate old man succeeded beyond his hopes; he made a magnificent chase and the ladies released him from his attendance upon them the following day—which, however, was rainy.

The Duc de Verneuil's guests remained five days at Rosembray. The last day, the *Gazette de France* contained the announcement of the nomination of Monsieur le Baron de Canalis to the rank of Commander of the Legion of Honor and to the post of Minister at Carlsruhe.

When, during the first days of December, Madame the Comtesse de la Bastie, having been operated upon by Desplein, could at last see Ernest de la Brière, she pressed Modeste's hand and said in her ear:

"I should have chosen him myself."

Toward the end of February, all the deeds of purchase were signed by the worthy and excellent Latournelle, the attorney of Monsieur Mignon in Provence. The family of La Bastie obtained from the king the distinguished honor of his signature to

the contract of marriage and the transmission of the title and the arms of La Bastie to Ernest de la Brière, who was authorized to call himself the Vicomte de la Bastie la Brière. The estate of La Bastie, raised again to an income of more than one hundred thousand francs, was converted into an entailed estate through letters patent which the Royal Court registered toward the end of April. The witnesses for La Brière were Canalis and the Minister for whom he had been private secretary for five years. Those for the bride were the Duc d'Hérouville and Desplein, to whom the Mignons were deeply grateful, after having given him magnificent testimonials.

Later, perhaps, we shall see again in the course of this long history of our manners and customs, Monsieur and Madame de la Brière la Bastie. Good judges will then remark, how sweet is married life and how easy its yoke, with an intelligent and educated wife. For Modeste, who knew how to avoid, according to her promise, the follies of pedantry, is still the pride and joy of her husband, as of her family and all who compose her world.

Paris, March—July, 1844.

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